A MODEL FOR MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT TEAM APPROACH TO NEW MEMBER ASSIMILATION AT THE SANCTUARY AT KINGDOM SQUARE

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ABSTRACT

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by
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United Theological Seminary, 2015

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This project addressed the ‘revolving door’ syndrome where persons joined the church and were not assimilated into the life of the ministry. The project’s purpose was to develop a ministry development team approach to assimilation. A qualitative research and a phenomenological design were used which captured the functions of a ministry development team and the experience of new members. The results of the data revealed that ministries were developed to connect with new members and new members were intentionally assimilated. From this project, changes in ministry functions and new member processes were implemented which can be replicated in other churches.

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Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

First I thank Almighty God for leading and keeping me through this challenging yet rewarding journey of doctoral study. God has truly been my strength, my fortress, and my refuge.

A special thank you to my anointed Pastor, Reverend Anthony G. Maclin, for his vision of ministry excellence and his example of godliness, compassion, and leadership. I'm most grateful for Pastor Maclin's support as I pursued this degree while serving in full-time ministry.

I thank my mentors, Dr. Angela Washington and Dr. Donnell Moore who encouraged me to trust the process and remain true to my testimony and to my ministry calling. My Washington-Moore peers have also been a blessing to me as we have studied, shared, grown, and bonded together in our focus group entitled "Prophetic Congregational Development Using 21st Century Methods, Establishing Strong Leadership."

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To God be the glory for the great things he has done!

DEDICATION

I dedicate this doctoral project to my mother, Dale Mallory Johnson. You are truly a virtuous woman! I'm so blessed to have been raised by such an awesome woman of God who fully understands the importance of faith and discipline in ministry preparation. You have taught me by example how to be a woman of integrity, longsuffering, peace, and compassion. Your smile and words of encouragement have inspired me throughout this journey. Thank you for your love and for always being there for me. I'm so proud to be your daughter. I love you!

INTRODUCTION

It is assumed that as churches grow and new members join that the new members will automatically find their rightful places to serve in the church in accordance with the spiritual gifts that God has given them. However, this does not happen without intentional efforts on the part of the members and ministries that are already present in the church. Unfortunately, all too often, the existing members and ministries are a hindrance to new members finding their rightful places, due to the lack of hospitality, lack of connectivity, and lack of ministry development and structure, thus, churches experience the 'revolving door syndrome' where new members come in the front door, do not feel welcomed or connected, and shortly thereafter leave out of the back door. Sadly enough, this happens without anyone recognizing that they are gone, checking on their whereabouts, or acknowledging their role in the reason they left. Thus, there is a need for an intentional process to assimilate new members into the life of the church. A process which will help new members develop a closer relationship with God and with others in the church, which leads them to become disciples of Jesus Christ, servants in the church, and to remain active members of the church.

I have experienced and witnessed the effect of not having an official and intentional assimilation process and its negative impact on new members and the entire church. What is defeating our purpose of making disciples for Jesus Christ are old school ministry methods of leaving people to fend for themselves, promoting cliques, not connecting with people who do not look like us, ministries not working together as a team, word of mouth ministry training (or no ministry training at all), outdated documented ministry protocols (or no documented ministry protocols at all), and lack of individual and ministry accountability. My context, The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square (TSAKS), has members and ministries who have not been spiritually, emotionally, and structurally developed in a way that would facilitate them helping to develop new members, thus, our challenge has been to develop our ministries, establish an assimilation process for our new members to matriculate through, and stop the 'revolving door syndrome.' Nelson Searcy of Grace Fellowship Church confirms that assimilation is integration into the local church as one moves from being merely a guest to becoming a fully engaged, responsible member of the local body of Christ.[1] Searcy further notes that assimilation leads to life transformation by giving people the means and opportunity to become maturing followers of Christ.[2]

In spite of TSAKS' great pastoral leadership, worship, preaching, and teaching, TSAKS has not kept abreast of assimilation models that would help develop ministries and connect new members with ministries where they can serve. Our new members are joining and being connected to worship, but not to ministry. A model to effectively address the 'revolving door syndrome' by developing and training ministries to be better equipped to receive, nurture, and track new members has not been adopted. I seek to identify and explore ministry development team approaches to assimilating new members into the church within my context that may become another model for churches to use to help new members establish meaningful relationships, understand the values of the church and ministry functions, acquire knowledge of their spiritual gifts and opportunities to serve in accordance with their spiritual gifts, and adapt a positive attitude about staying at TSAKS.

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[1] "Fusion Notes by Nelson Searcy," *Grace Fellowship Church*, accessed September 4, 2015, http://gfc.cc/fusion-notes-by-nelson-searcy.

[2] "Fusion Notes by Nelson Searcy."

This document highlights many of the God moments in my life where God has prepared and positioned me to develop a model, an organized, structured approach, for assimilating new members into the life of the church of Jesus Christ. It is the responsibility of everyone in the church, not just the pastor, to welcome the new members that God is sending to TSAKS and to involve them in ministry. God is sending new members not for who we are but for what they can bring, to use their gifts in areas where their gifts are needed to serve at TSAKS for the upbuilding of God's Kingdom. This model will allow our church and other churches to become more inviting, inclusive, and intentional as we help our new members to take their rightful places in the body of Christ.

Chapter one introduces the reader to my background and spiritual journey. It also sheds light on how my spiritual journey intersects with my context, The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square. This chapter also discusses and analyzes the context and provides some insight on the growth and evolvement of the ministry that created this project.

In chapter two, the biblical foundations on which the project is grounded is explored and fully discussed and expounded. Chapters three and four establish and reflect on the historical and theological foundations on which the project is grounded. In these chapters, the lessons of history and theology are applied and discussed to underscore the process of assimilation as ordained by God and scripture.

In chapter five, a thorough exploration of the literature that undergirds this project was undertaken. Under the nomenclature, theoretical foundations, some of the theories, models, and applications for equipping and/or training leaders assist new members to become rooted into the life of the church.

Chapter six of this document provides a format for the methodology of the project and defines a structure for the research methodology. This chapter documents and shares how the context associates arrived at the applicable research methodology that was utilized to facilitate the project at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square. It also discusses the field experience and documents the activities that informed this study. It describes in detail the steps that were taken during the field experience to ensure reliable results were attained. This chapter further investigates and presents the results of the ministry project. It includes the data collection methods and analyzes the data to arrive at specific core measures in assimilating new members in the church. Finally, it presents a summary of learning, and concluding thoughts.

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work" (1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NIV).

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

God Moments

Through my experience at United Theological Seminary I have identified significant God moments in my life. In retrospect, there have been God moments from my past to my present where God has restored broken relationships in my life, revealed himself to me, shaped me, and prepared me to address the significance of ministry development and relationships in assimilating new members into the life of the church.

Prepared For Such A Time As This: Family

Born March 28, 1959 in Washington, D.C. I was the first child born to my very proud parents. My brother came along eight years later and impacted the serenity of my being an only child, although we grew to be very close and remain very close until this day. Actually, it was nice to have a little brother, except for those obvious times when the age difference really started to be an issue, i.e. when I had to share time with my friends and my little brother. My brother and I living with our parents in an apartment just a few blocks away from my grandparents' house is a vague memory of mine.

Unfortunately, our parents divorced when I was nine years old and my brother was one year old, seemingly out of the blue, and there went our happy home forever. Many years later, my brother and I found out that that home wasn't so happy after all. The divorce turned out to be the result of our father's disease – alcoholism, which brought about much drama, distrust, and instability for our family – our family relationship had been broken and this substance abuse curse would later become a lifelong struggle for my brother as well…I believe that God is still able to deliver!

Thankfully, my brother and I were spared the gory details of our parents' painful marriage and divorce at that time. I do remember, however, literally walking from my parent's apartment to my maternal grandparent's house, with our belongings in tow, and moving in at the tender age of nine years old. Ironically enough, this was the same year that I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour and was baptized at Glendale Baptist Church, now The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square – my relationship with God had begun. Thereby, my brother and I were raised by our loving mother and nurturing grandparents, who kept us in church, and I do not have recollection of much interaction with our father after that. We later found out that we were kept away from him "for our own good." It was not until we were both grown that we began to initiate a relationship with our father – the broken relationship was somewhat restored and sustained until his death in 2005. By the way, our sharing in our father's end of life journey shockingly revealed that we had other siblings – broken relationships we never knew we had.

Our grandparent's home turned out to be a 'safe haven' in many ways. A place where we were loved and protected from the negative influences that were literally right outside of our door. A place where we were even spared the negative influences of racism. We were often told that we could be whatever we wanted to be in life if we just lived right, remained respectful of others, and worked hard to succeed. Our grandfather had retired as a porter at Union Station due to his failing health. I understand that he bad been very much the family bread-winner. But I'm also told that the disease of alcoholism plagued him as well. I do, however, recall my grandfather having a trach in his neck and not being able to speak clearly toward the end of his life. My grandfather passed away when I was young but I have fond memories of him speaking of the importance of getting an education and of him helping me with my homework every day when I came home from school.

My grandmother had retired from the federal government as a food service worker and therefore was always home to care for us, especially when my mother was working, sometimes both full-time and part-time jobs, to make ends meet. My grandmother was an excellent baker, cook, housekeeper, and gardener. My mother was a child care professional and she too was very much involved in my studies and supported and encouraged academic excellence. My mother completed studies at DC Teachers College in Early Childhood Education. Although I had my share of outdoor playtime with my friends in the neighborhood, my favorite pastimes as a child were listening to music, working puzzles, and reading books in the comfort of our home. My mother kept the books coming by placing me in a mail-order book club, which I thoroughly enjoyed. To this day I haven't seen a library or book store that I didn't love. Academics were truly valued in our household. I remember the joy of receiving my first set of encyclopedias which I used well into my college years. Throughout grade school and college I excelled academically, often being on the honor roll and being inducted into honor societies.

Prepared For Such A Time As This: Church

While my mother and grandmother insisted that my brother and I attend church every Sunday, I don't recall my grandmother, grandfather, father, or uncles ever attending church with my mother, brother, and I. This was actually the same church that my grandmother had taken her seven children to, where my mother and her siblings had grown up in, which was located just two blocks away from my grandmother's house. I would, however, often hear my grandmother quoting scriptures and singing hymns around the house, such as "Oh for a faith that will not shrink though pressed by every foe. That will not tremble on the brink of any earthly woe!" and "Farther along we'll know all about it. Farther along we'll understand why; Cheer up my brother, live in the sunshine; We'll understand it all by and by."

Both my brother and I were active in several ministries, to include children's choir, young people's choir, junior usher board, and junior missionary. I am most grateful to the elders of the church, to include Pastor Abraham Lincoln Colston, Deacon Claude Anderson, Deacon Charles Rowell, Sister Henrietta Johnson, Deaconess Andriette Long, and Trustee Catherine Coleman, who helped to nurture me to be the woman that I am today. All of the sermons and Bible classes have proven to be invaluable to my spiritual growth and development. As a young adult and adult, serving in ministries to include Music, Missions, Sunday School, Trustee, Diaconate, and Ministerial Staff have afforded me opportunities to serve, preach, teach, and develop individuals and ministries at Glendale Baptist Church, now The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square.

Prepared For Such A Time As This: Memories

I have several significant good memories to include running on the track team in elementary school, learning Spanish in middle school, taking drivers education in high school, going on high school class trip to Jamaica, working summer jobs, being accepted into college, graduating from college, having a successful career, buying cars, getting married, having children, buying houses, and always developing new relationships.

Some of my best memories were actually in church, where again I developed new relationships, attended worship services, traveled with our former Pastor, Reverend Colston, to worship services at other churches, enjoyed many fellowships and trips, attended Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and Bible Study, attended Lott Carey Foreign Missions Conventions, visited nursing homes, fed the hungry, participated in Easter and Christmas program recitals, and, most importantly came to know the Lord for myself.

My not so good memories include the death of loved ones to include my grandfather, grandmothers, uncles, pastor, father, and husband. Losing my pastor was very difficult for me as he had been such a strong influence in my life and my spiritual development in the absence of my father. Losing my father was difficult because we had just reunited as father and daughter after many estranged years due to my father's alcoholism. Although I was very disappointed about the decisions that my father had made in his life which negatively impacted his life and our ability to have a meaningful relationship, I was glad to have literally spent his last days with him in hospice care, to share the love of God with him, and to be called by him 'his preacher daughter'.

Prepared For Such A Time As This: Life Impacted

I have been impacted by many people in my life. My family has impacted me both positively and negatively. The love and support of my family has been remarkable, especially after I realized the sacrifices that my mother made to ensure that I had what I needed growing up, that I learned responsibility, good study habits, good work ethics, and that I accepted the Lord as my Savior and was baptized as a child. On the other hand, I witnessed the negative results of family members not receiving salvation and not attending church - alcoholism, smoking, drug addiction, illness, fighting, cursing, being in inappropriate relationships, having babies out of wedlock, and making bad life decisions - therefore I had several lessons in how not to live my life, but later several opportunities to minister to my family in love.

Again, I was encouraged by my relationships with my mother and my grandmother. I learned from them that I was important; that I could be whatever I wanted to be if I studied and worked hard; that God took care of his people; that if you treated people right they would treat you right; that there is some good in everybody; that everybody needs to be loved; that I must *be* different in order to *do* something different from those around me; that structure and organization was a good thing; that it was important to make goals and do what it took to reach them , in spite of your environment; that education was the key to success; that I should choose my friends carefully; that the decisions I was making would impact my future; God bless the child who had his own, and always respect your elders.

My grandmother bought me that first set of encyclopedias at a time when family funds were limited and other children my age, in my community, and in my family were not studying as intensely. I also recall my grandmother purchasing my first set of luggage, sending me or taking me on trips at a time when other children my age and in my community and family were not traveling. She said that it was important to get out and see what was going on in places other than my immediate surroundings.

I often wondered why I couldn't do what I saw my friends and family members doing and I thought my mother and grandmother were too strict on me. I was often teased for not being able to go certain places; not being able to do certain things; not being able to wear certain clothes, not being able to stay out late; not being able to go out unless my mother knew where I was going, who I was going with, how I was getting where I was going, and how and what time was I getting back; not being able to associate with certain people; and not being able to sleep over other people's houses, to include family members. I later realized that my mother and grandmother were protecting me from the consequences of unruly living… living that would lead to regrets, life distractions, dream killers, and derailments.

Likewise, my friends had an impact on me. Of course, there was the negative peer pressure that got me in my share of trouble. But there was always the positive peer pressure to do good in school and to live a Christian lifestyle.

Prepared For Such A Time As This: Role Models

My role models turned out to be those who literally invested in me, spent time to help me to develop, and often prayed for me, such as my mother, grandmother, Sunday School teachers, church mothers, deacons, deaconesses, grade school teachers, college professors, employers, co-workers, and pastors. My mother and grandmother taught me how to love and care for my family. I was happy when my mother remarried a wonderful man of God when I was 18 years old because it was then that I had the opportunity to witness what a real, Christian marriage looks like. My stepfather was very instrumental in my development. He moved us into a beautiful home and was always there to support my school and church activities and to teach me things, such how to open a bank account, how to search for an apartment, how to buy furniture, how to buy a car, and how to entertain guests for cookouts and Redskin football games. I particularly enjoyed when the gospel quartet group that he sang with rehearsed at our house, singing praises unto the Lord! I was also positively impacted by attending church with him at Charm City Disciples of Christ Church in Baltimore, MD where his mother and my grandmother, was the Founder and Pastor. I was particularly blessed by the very spiritual moments spent with my grandmother at her house and at our house as she often prayed with and for me.

My role models have impacted me in many positive ways. They taught me much about professional preparation...how to dress for success, how to be respectful of others, how to have good work ethics, how to complete projects in a timely manner, how to be accountable, how to follow directions, how to delegate authority, how to be a change agent, how to help people, how to get along with all types of people. They also taught me that there were consequences for bad decisions and bad behavior as I had to endure punishments (taking away of privileges). I learned fairly quickly to avoid those situations and people which caused me to get punished. My role models also taught me the art of prioritizing. This teaching started at home as I often wondered why I had to do my homework before I went outside to play...why I had to take my little brother for a walk before I could go out on a date...why I had to walk with my mother to the laundromat and help hang the clothes on the line...why I had to do house chores every Saturday…why I had to go to church every Sunday...all this seemed very different from what my friends and other family members were doing. I later learned these were the things that I had to *do* differently in order for me to *be* different. I am thankful that I was exposed to positive people in my life, like the neighbor who helped me with Summer employment and transportation to work. Like the business owners who demonstrated that dreams could come true if you studied your craft, made good use of your time, made good decisions, and associated yourself with the right people.

Prepared For Such A Time As This: Life Changers

As an adult there were specific life events that significantly impacted my life. These events were fashioned by my past experiences and have helped to shape who I am today. One such event was helping to take care of my grandmother as she aged. It was a labor of love to take her to doctor appointments, comb her hair, and return the loving care to her before she passed away that she had once provided to me. My relationship with my grandparents has inspired me to advocate for and serve the elderly as evidence in my career positions of Wellness Director at a senior living complex, Director of Senior Services at a non-profit organization, and Long-Term Care Ombudsman at AARP.

My entire educational journey and professional career have impacted my life as now I realize that all the while God was preparing me to serve in ministry and to develop others in ministry. The lasting relationships established along the way have been instrumental to my development and assimilation into ministry. I'm grateful to God for the opportunity to have earned my Bachelor of Business Administration (major-Management), Master of Business Administration (major-Health Services Administration), Master of Divinity, Masters Certificate of Gerontology, and Certificate of Child Care Management. I must say that my experience at the Howard University School of Divinity has shaped me in a major way as such legendary professors as Dr. Cain Hope Felder, Dr. Delores Carpenter, Dr. Gene Rice, Dr. Cheryl Sanders, Dr. Kenyetta Gilbert, Dr. Michael Newheart, Dr. Harold Dean Trulear, Dr. Frederick Ware, Dr. Michael Bledsoe, and Dr. Kwakye-Nuako deposited into my life.

I'm also grateful for the opportunity to have been employed in healthcare management positions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Howard University Hospital, and Columbia Hospital for Women. As God transitioned me from the corporate healthcare industry to the non-profit industry as Deputy Director for Community Services at United Communities Against Poverty, Assistant Director of Kings Kids Child Development Center, Director of Bible Babies Child Development Center, and Consultant/Human Resources Manager at Health Care Dynamics International, all roads have truly lead to my current full-time ministry position.

Another event that significantly impacted my life was marriage. I had been taught to get an education, a job, become financial self-sufficient, and spiritually grounded before getting married, therefore, I waited until after I received my Master's degree, was gainfully employed, had my own place to live, and was fully grounded in the Lord, before marrying my high school sweetheart. Unfortunately, I disregarded the fact that you should not be unequally yoked, thus, ten years and two beautiful children later, we were divorced (I thank God he is now saved, remarried, and we have become better friends than we were marriage partners). Several years later I was blessed with an opportunity to love again and married my now deceased husband, a wonderful saved man of God, who was a graduate of the Howard University School of Divinity, a certified Chaplain, a bank manager, and an ordained minister of the gospel. Our life together was truly a blessing as I was able to finally enjoy a Christian marriage and was actually ushered into my ministry calling. The experience of losing a loving husband after just five years of marriage was something that I could not have imagined experiencing in a million years and took its toll on me emotionally, but I took comfort in knowing that he was with the Lord. Yes, being a divorcee, a widow, and a single mother had truly been tests of my faith in every way. But God remained faithful and saw me through it all; through all of the hurt, the shame, the emotional rollercoasters, the financial challenges, and yes, the forgiveness and the healing. Because of the forgiveness, healing, and restoration that I have received from God, I am now able to facilitate forgiveness, healing, and restoration for others.

Prepared For Such A Time As This: Joys of Motherhood

Being a mother has turned out to be one of the joys of my life. I thank God that both my daughter and my son (ages 28 and 25 years old respectively) are saved, active in ministry, college educated, employed full time, and living on their own. I've truly enjoyed every stage of their lives (yes, even the adolescent years), watching them mature and become responsible, compassionate young adults with great leadership skills and involved in meaningful relationships. I continue to enjoy nurturing them, spending time with them, being there for consultation in every aspect of their lives, and emailing them daily scriptures. I believe that the nurturing, encouragement, and teaching that I received in my life has allowed me to nurture, encourage, and teach my children. I grew up in the church and subsequently, my children grew up in the same church. My mother and grandmothers prayed for me, so I learned to pray for my children. I believe that the sincere faith of my mother and grandmothers has been passed on from one generation to another.

When my children were young, I made sure they knew that…if it had not been for the Lord that was on my side, I didn't know where I would be. So I had them keep scripture journals and prayer journals where they would study specific scriptures, then write out what the scriptures meant to them and how they could apply the scriptures to their lives. Then I had them to discuss the scriptures with me, and then use those same scriptures to develop prayers (prayers of petition, prayers of thanksgiving, prayers of praise and adoration, prayers of intercession, prayers of penitence). I did this because, as a mother, I wanted to be intentional in stirring up the gift of God in my children. I wanted my children to have the same sincere faith in them that I had in me, and that my grandmothers and my mother had in them. I wanted my children to know the Lord for themselves.

My children's very lives are a testimony that prayer does change things because in spite of all of the hardships that the three of us have endured together, we are complete and whole mentally, physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. God has truly delivered us from brokenness, heartaches, rejection, grief, migraines, fainting spells, depression, low self-esteem, peer pressure, and financial hardship. We can now minister to families who are experiencing similar life challenges, letting them know that nothing is too hard for God and that God is able to bring them through.

Prepared For Such A Time As This: Spiritual Awareness

All of these life experiences, modeling, and instruction have impacted who I am today and my ministry. Spiritually, I know that I have been saved because I have confessed with my mouth the Lord Jesus and I believe in my heart that God raised him from the dead. I have been converted, I am sanctified and I shall be glorified. My conversion has moved me from conviction, to repentance, to regeneration. I understand that the Father created the plan of salvation, making me aware of his goodness in creation. The Son executed the plan of salvation, redeeming me by dying on the cross, and making the way to get back to the Father. The Holy Spirit reveals the plan of salvation, empowers me to accept Jesus, teaches me and guides me in my new life, and convicts me. I continue to hunger and thirst for God and his word.

I have been a part of the same church all of my life and continue to enjoy worship and to experience the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. All of the sermons that I have heard, songs of praise that I have sung, scriptures that I have read, Bible study classes that I have attended, have prepared me to serve God and his people in a wholehearted way. My church has provided a positive support system all of my life and has served as my extended family, helping me to find and exercise faith and assimilate in many ways into the life of ministry. By the grace of God, I have become a woman who loves God, and my biological and church families, and enjoy sharing the gospel and serving others.

Prepared For Such A Time As This: The Call

I am humbled to be called by Almighty God as a minister of the gospel in accordance with Luke 4:18 – "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel…" I know that I have been called because of the urging that I received from God to preach his Word, which I wrestled with for many years, and then I eventually accepted the call. As I was being urged by God, I felt a sense of restlessness that would not go away. I had a hunger and thirst for God's Word and to lead unsaved souls to Christ. As I wrestled with the call, I felt inadequate and unworthy as I struggled through denial of being called to preach. When I accepted the call, I felt relieved and at peace as I was comforted by God's Word and preached my initial sermon.

Since then I have continued to prepare to be used by God, to proclaim the gospel, and to prepare others to meet their God. The evidence which confirms my call is unsaved persons giving their lives to Christ and saved persons developing a closer relationship with Christ.

Prepared For Such A Time As This: Joy of Restoration

As a wife, I truly thank God for restoration as I am now happily married to a wonderful man of God who I believe God has sent for me to love, respect, and enjoy for the rest of our lives. He has been prepared for such a time as this to be my covering and the head of our household. Being his helpmeet is an honor, a privilege and a joy. We share in the goodness of the Lord and enjoy serving others in ministry together. I believe that my husband is truly a man after God's own heart as he loves me as Christ loves the church and as he continues to study to show himself approved unto God, as a student at Maple Springs Baptist Bible College and Seminary. Having completed The Sanctuary School of Ministry, currently enrolled in the Ministers-in-Training Program at The Sanctuary, and serving as an Ordained Deacon, my hushand takes his salvation and God's calling on his life very seriously as he operates in his spiritual gifts, serving our Pastor, congregation, and community.

I also thank God for restoring my relationship with all four of my siblings this year. We are now spending time together and getting to know each other and each other' families. Barriers have been removed. Hurts have been healed. The past has been put behind us. And now the love of God abounds as other opportunities for salvation and fellowship are presented.

Prepared For Such A Time As This: Relationships That Lead to Service

Who I am becoming impacts my model for ministry as is evidenced by the ministry nuances that have evolved in my life. Having faithfully served in several ministries at The Sanctuary, licensed as a preacher of the Gospel in January 2005, under the anointed leadership of Pastor Anthony G. Maclin, and having the privilege of being the first female minister ordained at The Sanctuary in November 2008, I continue to serve the Pastor, congregation, and community, and to study to show myself approved unto God. My ordination experience was particularly impactful as I studied under the excellent leadership of the Kingdom Association of Covenant Pastors (KACP) and was privileged to have my Ordination Council led by Bishop Walter Scott Thomas, Sr., KACP Presiding Prelate and Pastor of New Psalmist Baptist Church, and Bishop Dwayne C. Debnam, KACP Executive Council Member and Pastor of Morning Star Baptist Church.

I have served as Worship Council Coordinator, Ministry Assimilation Team Co-Leader, Sanctuary School of Ministry Instructor, and Minister of the Christian Education Ministry. I attend Bible Institute and serve with the Sick and Visitation Ministry and the Nursing Home Ministry. I am honored to be doing what I love as an employee of The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square in the capacity of the first female Pastoral Assistant as well as the Chief of Staff. I'm also honored to serve as President of our Central Gateway

Community Development Corporation (CDC). I remain humbled to be called by Almighty God to preach the Gospel and to serve in kingdom building. One of my favorite scriptures is I Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

The model of ministry that is being shaped in me is one which focuses on providing compassionate care and healing presence to help new members to establish a relationship with God and ministries within the church where they can be nurtured, grow, and serve in accordance with their spiritual gifts. I believe God is using my life experiences to be a blessing to others. I can encourage people to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths" because I have trusted God and he has directed my paths. I remember having to file for bankruptcy, I trusted the Lord with all my heart and he directed my path. I remember hitting up against that proverbial glass ceiling a few times, I trusted the Lord with all my heart and he directed my path. I remember when my jobs downsized and laid me off, I trusted the Lord with all my heart and he directed my path. I remember when my son was in a car accident at seventeen years old and his car landed upside down in a tree, and he was thrown into the windshield and severely injured, I trusted the Lord with all my heart and he directed my path. And yes, I remember when my husband slipped into a diabetic coma and died at the age of forty-nine, I trusted the Lord with all my heart and he directed my path.

I am most grateful to God for restoring me and helping me to balance family, career, ministry, and school. I thank God for establishing meaningful relationships in my life which have allowed me to assimilate and help others to assimilate into the life of the church, operating within my spiritual gifts of faith, administration, intercession, exhortation, preaching, teaching, and helps, serving to the glory of Almighty God.

The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square (TSAKS)[1]

TSAKS has a legendary history and is a wonderful place to grow spiritually and serve in accordance with one's spiritual gifts. The vision of TSAKS, as born again believers, is to reach a multitude of non-believers while impacting and empowering the world through the Holy Spirit, and the presence and power of Jesus Christ.

TSAKS' mission is to promote the spread of the Gospel, the winning of souls to Jesus Christ, the changing of lives, and establishing the presence of the Lord in the world through evangelizing, biblical teaching, economic development, and community outreach. With faith in Almighty God, we seek to be a church preparing born again believers for the Kingdom of God.

TSAKS Core Values are:

WORD - We believe that the Word of God is the center of our effort and activity. John 1:1

WORSHIP - We believe that the Word of God encourages the people of God to Worship the Lord and we do so without any reservation or shame. Psalm 95:6-8

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[1] The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square Office Staff Manual.

WORK - We believe that as the Word of God begins to change the people of God through the Holy Spirit, we have the motivation to work for the cause of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord. John 9:4

WITNESS - We believe that every regenerated believer that has been touched by the hand of God ought to be a willing witness to what the Lord has done in his/her life. Acts 1:8

WILL - We believe that every believer should partake in a lifelong search that culminates in them finding their place in the will of God. Ephesians 1:1-12

WEALTH - We believe that the Word of God teaches every disciple to share 10% of his or her wealth (time, talent, treasure) to support the growth of and to sustain the ongoing ministries of the church in which they hold membership. Deuteronomy 8:11-19

WALK - We believe that as a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Ephesians 4:1

Worship services at TSAKS are filled with dynamic preaching, singing, and praise. Our members serve faithfully both inside and outside of TSAKS. Over 70 ministries are in place, presenting plenty of opportunities for members of all ages to serve from our Youth to our Millennials to our Golden Agers. Youth Church services are held twice a month. Christian Education is highly emphasized as an array of classes are offered in Sunday School, Bible Institute, Sanctuary School of Ministry, Diaconate Training, Ministers-in-Training Program, Ordination Training, Achievers Tutorial Program, MasterLife Discipleship Program, and New Members Class.

History of The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square[2]

(Formerly Glendale Baptist Church)

Early in the year 1927, Rev. Bernard Botts, a son of Metropolitan Baptist Church, felt it was necessary to have a house of worship in the Northeast area of Washington, D.C. As he and his wife were visiting a friend on Gault Place, Northeast, Mrs. Irene Botts saw two small boys playing, Jesse and Claude Anderson and inquired of them if they knew who owned the framed building at 4502 Gault Place. The two young boys referred her to their mother, Mrs. Mary Kelly, who gave Mrs. Botts the necessary contact information concerning the realtor of the property.

After consulting with the realtor, Rev. Botts decided to rent the framed house and a few months later purchased the property. Assisting Rev. Botts in getting the house ready for church services was Deacon Osborne Kelly. He removed the inner walls and built the first pulpit. Later, a few members met to select a name for the church. Because of the church's geographical location in Washington, D.C., which at that time was known as Glendale, the name chosen was Glendale Baptist Church. Subsequently, Rev. Botts was elected as the first pastor.

Mrs. Smallwood a member of Metropolitan Baptist Church was very helpful to Rev. Botts in the early organization of the church. Shortly thereafter, an order of church service was developed to include Sunday School, Morning Service, and Evening Service. Rev. Ernest Miltier, another son of Metropolitan Baptist Church also provided a helping hand with the church services. Rev. Botts found it necessary to return to his churches in Maryland and Virginia and left Rev. Miltier in charge to lead the congregation. In July

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[2] The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square Church Records.

1927 Rev. Miltier became the second pastor. The church suffered a spiritual and financial decline in 1932 and help was sought under the leadership of Deacon Percy Brown and others.

The name of Rev. William H. Gibson was submitted by Rev. R. D. Grymes of Salem Baptist Church to the membership for consideration to lead the congregation. Rev. Gibson accepted the call and preached his first pastoral sermon on January 22, 1933. He started a building program that finished in the erection of a new edifice at 4504 Gault Place, N.E. On Sunday, May 14, 1933, Rev. R. D. Grymes preached the cornerstone-laying sermon and immediately afterwards the Independent Order of Elks of the World laid the cornerstone in place.

On December 6, 1962, a special called meeting was held with the Official Board. At this meeting Rev. Gibson agreed to retire after 29 years of service due to his failing health effective December 31, 1962. The Pulpit Committee, comprised of the Official Board, searched for a new pastor and after 10 months the name of Rev. Abraham Lincoln Colston was presented to the church on Friday, October 25, 1963. Deacon Percy Brown moderated this meeting where the Official Board and the 40 members present unanimously voted for Rev. Colston.

A church meeting was held on November 8, 1963 and Rev. Colston's letter of acceptance was read and received. On Sunday, January 5, 1964, Rev. Colston preached his incoming sermon titled "A Soldier's Interview With His Captain." On Sunday, February 23, 1964, Rev. H. Ellis Turner of Carron Baptist Church duly installed Rev. Colston as the fourth pastor of the church.

Rev. Colston was richly blessed by the Lord with the power to lead this congregation; his arrival marked a new chapter in the life of Glendale church. His life's story is filled with many good acts and deeds dedicated to the cause in spreading the gospel and one who after his interview with his Captain saw what was needed for the Glendale Baptist Church. He pursued his goals, even to the point of exhaustion at times, doing what he knew the Lord wanted him to do.

After years of worship in the "old framed building", God saw fit through the inspirational leadership of Rev. Colston to build a new building of "steel and stone." On May 29, 1976, a monumental step was taken - ground breaking for a new edifice. On March 10, 1978, Rev. Andrew Fowler, Pastor of Capital View Baptist Church, preached the cornerstone-laying sermon and the cornerstone was laid by the D. C. Prince Hall Grand Lodge F&AM PHA. It was not very long through Rev. Colston's leadership, the Church was able to purchase the corner lot. The members were hopeful that in the next few years the lot adjacent to the church would belong to Glendale as well. Rev. Colston, in his almost twenty-one years both spiritually winning souls for Christ and financially meeting many of the goals set continued to build up the church. On July 22, 1985, God saw fit to call Rev. Colston from labor to reward. He was loved and respected not only by Glendale, but also by everyone who crossed his path in life. His presence and leadership have been greatly felt in the hearts of many.

The Pulpit Committee comprising of the Official Board was organized again in search of a new pastor for the congregation. Deacon James Long, his wife Andriette, and Hazel Phillips strongly endorsed Rev. Anthony G. Maclin as one of the final two candidates for service. On Monday, June 9, 1986, the Official Board called a special church meeting to vote and the members unanimously agreed on Rev. Anthony G. Maclin. Deacon Claude Anderson was the moderator at that meeting. On Sunday, July 6, 1986, Pastor-elect Maclin preached his acceptance sermon to the Glendale Baptist Church congregation. On Sunday, September 28, 1986 Dr. Lehman D. Bates of First Baptist Church of Marshall Heights, Washington, D.C. duly installed him as the fifth pastor of the church.

Pastor Maclin an energetic, innovative, and anointed servant began his pastorate at Glendale lifting the church to new spiritual horizons and economic achievements. The church membership increased in numbers, spirituality, unity, and love. With Pastor Maclin's foresight and business wisdom, a church budget was created to purchase real estate in the Glendale area, a church van, and the addition of a handicap ramp to the church entranceway. In 1990, under Pastor Maclin's leadership the church was able to burn the mortgage on the former edifice at 4504 Gault Place, N.E. Later the church purchased the apartment building located at 4505 Gault Place, N.E., which was then named The Center for Education and Administration and used as offices and classrooms.

The church continued to grow in members and search for a new sanctuary for worship was underway. Pastor Maclin's vision and design for the former Seidel Chevrolet car dealership located at 7610 Central Avenue, Landover, Maryland accomplished the challenge. The church purchased and renovated the car dealership as we "POSSESSED THE LAND".

On March 18, 1995, the congregation paraded from Gault Place, N.E. (former edifice) to the site of the new church home. Upon arriving at the new Church home, a ribbon-cutting ceremony and the first worship service was held. At this location the church was able to have a fellowship and dining hall, additional classrooms, and a suite of administrative offices. The membership had increased to over 800 believers, two Sunday morning worship services, a Wednesday Night Worship service, and Bible Institute classes were held on Wednesdays twice a day - noon and evening.

In June 1997, with Pastor Maclin's business credentials and the continued vision to "possess the land" the church expanded its real estate wealth by purchasing the former Lincoln Technical Institute located at 7800 Central Avenue, Capitol Heights, Maryland. This property was renamed the Glendale Baptist Church Christian Life Center, home to Bible Babies Child Development Center, a satellite site for Bowie State University Extension Courses, the Glendale Gladiator Gymnasium, the Logos Bookshop, Angel Hair Beauty Salon, and the Majestic Glow Barbershop.

The Glendale Mass Choir recorded its first live musical recording on audiocassette, compact disc, and video format released September 26, 1998. The Mass Choir also released its second CD recording "I Admit, I Worship" on February 22, 2004.

On Sunday, May 30, 1999, a special called church conference was held and the congregation unanimously approved the leasing and renovation of the former "Rhythms" nightclub located at 7752 Landover Road, Landover, Maryland, in the Dodge Plaza Shopping Center. This new worship center, a Christian performing arts complex as well as the home of a growing church congregation, took the message of Jesus Christ to that culturally diverse community. From the congregation the members serving in this community formed a new branch and "birthed" the Multicultural Worship Center on January 1, 2000.

New Year's Eve Celebration 2003 Pastor Maclin's message "TAKING AIM" (Philippians 3:13-14) was held in the old AMES Department Store in the Hampton Mall Complex, Capitol Heights, Maryland. His inspiration for the message was the open door to the next move of God in the life of the church, to revitalize a dying community through economics and spreading the Gospel. Plans for the purchase and renovation of the Hampton Mall Complex occupying 254,000 square footage for the new church site were accomplished and on Resurrection Sunday 2004, the Hampton Mall Complex was renamed "Kingdom Square" and the Glendale Baptist Church, Washington, D.C. was renamed "THE SANCTUARY AT KINGDOM SQUARE". In April 2004, the congregation occupied a temporary worship sanctuary at 9171 Central Avenue (of the mall area) while waiting the renovation of the main sanctuary at 9033 Central Avenue which would seat 1,500 persons for worship services, include a prayer chapel, Christian book store (LOGOS), and kitchen facility.

In November of 2005 a 52-day journey was started to complete phase one of the main sanctuary; in 2008 additional space was opened for classrooms, and on April 13, 2008 two pillars in our congregation – Deacon Claude Anderson, a charter member who retired after 18 years from the Chairman office of the Deacon Ministry, and Trustee Catherine Coleman, who also had retired after 32 years of service from the office of Chairlady of the Trustee Ministry was honored in the dedication ceremony opening the Anderson Coleman Conference Center. THE SANCTUARY also had started the redevelopment of Kingdom Square into GATEWAY at KINGDOM SQUARE. The complex now extended to an area of one million square footage, with $250 million in development costs that established new businesses to stimulate the economy in the community to include: Staples Office Supplies, Everlasting Life Health Food Restaurant, Checker's Restaurant, Long John Silver's Restaurant, Allstate Insurance, Beauty.COM, Bally's Total Fitness Center, Good Year Tires, Family Dollar, Credit Union Family Service Center, and the Magic Touch Cleaners. This marked a huge step in ministry for the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The Sanctuary was among the first churches in the area to own a commercial complex as well as a worship center in the same location.

There was a shift in the paradigm for rendering service unto the Lord and how His Word would remain relevant for the day. The Sanctuary in November 2008 through community outreach started the "Focus on Giving" campaign in the Capitol Heights, Maryland area. During the month of November, the church would deliver to 100 families "thanksgiving baskets" to assist them in feeding their families and strengthening relational ties with the community residents. This service has become an annual event shared by several of the ministries in the church. The Lord continued to show favor in 2011 towards the congregation in continuing the renovation of the main sanctuary to provide a state-of-the-art Nurse's Suite, and further adding to the peace of the prayer chapel with a glass enclosure prayer garden. As The Sanctuary was blessed, the blessing went forth to the people of Haiti after baring witness to the devastation left behind from the earthquake of 2011. The church helped to rebuild communities and send large shipments of medicine and medical supplies to help in the fight against the outbreak of Cholera following the earthquake. Pastor Maclin and The Sanctuary were called upon in 2012 to lead the efforts among the churches here to visit and assist in New Jersey after Hurricane Sandy had struck the area leaving many families without shelter, food, and clothing. The church was able to provide two tractor-trailers of supplies to our neighbors in Highlands, New Jersey from the Washington metropolitan area.

The Sanctuary, keeping relevant in church service and administration, appointed in January 2013 Minister Deborah Scarborough as the first female pastoral assistant; in May 2014 after a training period, eighteen deaconesses were ordained as deacons to serve the congregation on the Diaconate Ministry. Pastor Maclin has organized numerous ministries, programs, and services all of which are intended to promote greater membership involvement in worship and church-community related activities. The Internet streaming broadcast of the Sunday and weekly services are viewed weekly on the World Wide Web at www.atthesanctuary.org connecting many souls around the world in service for the Lord.

Pastor Maclin's spiritual guidance and mentorship has birthed 11 sons of the church who continue to faithfully lead their congregations: Pastor Leon Leath; Bishop Melvin Blake; Pastor William Cabell; Pastor Garfield Burton; Pastor Benjamin Cuthbertson; Pastor Charles Goodman; Pastor Michael Flowers; Pastor Nurney Mason; Pastor Roderick Parks; Pastor Phillip Taylor; and Pastor Andrew Tribble.

The church membership has grown from 192 active members in 1986 to more than 4,000 at present. At the July 2014 mid-year church conference, Pastor Maclin introduced a new concept in church organization, the Elders Council, to help assist in the ongoing church development and workings within the ministries to streamline the approach for the increasing needs of the members. We have grown in God's love, spiritually, financially, and economically. As a result, in August 2014 the church started "Operation Manifestation" in the relocation of the current edifice from Capitol Heights, Maryland to our future site at 5300 Crain Highway in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. We anticipate many more spiritual changes and await further guidance from the Lord through the leadership of Pastor Maclin. This relocation is a step to the next level in ministry for a congregation that has sought to perform God's work in an excellent way for over 88 years. We pray that God's mercy will continue to flow throughout the persons associated with the ministry of The Sanctuary and even greater works will be done for the Kingdom of God and His people. Our adherence to the Will of God shall lead us on to even greater heights as we continue to carry out the CORE VALUES for the church and as believers in Christ – WORD, WALK, WILL, WORSHIP, WITNESS, WORK, and WEALTH.

"But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."
1 Corinthians 2:9 (KJV)

Demographics

It is realized that while our congregation is a community of God, dedicated to sacred things, we are also a social institution that works with other entities to serve constituents. Thus, I studied our congregation through an ecological frame and examined how our congregation exists in relation to our environment in terms of scope, demography, and culture. The Sanctuary is located in Capitol Heights, Maryland. Capitol Heights is a town in Prince George's County, Maryland. Prince George's County is a county located immediately north, east, and south of Washington, D.C. According to a 2011 estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a population of 871,233, and is home to Joint Base Andrews and is a part of the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area, with its county seat being Upper Marlboro. A mere glance at the diversity of Prince George's County confirms its role as a cultural and economic leader of tomorrow. Located in the heart of the Baltimore/Washington corridor, the County borders Washington D.C. and is just 37 miles south of the city of Baltimore. Encompassing almost 500 square miles, Prince George's County has an urban atmosphere that still manages to provide a scenic and peaceful place to live, work, and play.[3]

Prince George's County was formed from land in Calvert and Charles Counties by an act of the General Assembly on St. George's Day, April 23, 1696. The County was named for Prince George of Denmark, husband of Princess Anne, heir to the throne of England.[4]

According to the US Census Bureau, the population of Prince George's County in 2014 was estimated at 904,430 and there were 330,516 housing units. In 2009-2013 there were 303,441 households, the median value of owner-occupied housing units was $269,800, and the median household income was $73,623.[5]

The Town of Capitol Heights consists of approximately 830 acres and is located in the Developed Tier of Prince George's County. Of that total land, 71.3% of the land is zoned for residential uses, 4.3% for commercial uses, 20.9% for industrial uses, 0.7% for mixed use, and 2.8% for open space.[6]

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[3] About PGC-Prince George's County. http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/AboutPGC/Pages/default.aspx. Accessed Oct. 27, 2105.

[4] About PGC-Prince George's County. http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/AboutPGC/Pages/default.aspx. Accessed Oct. 27, 2105.

[5] Prince George's County QuickFacts from the US Census. http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/24/24033.html. Accessed Oct. 27, 2015.

Development around the Capitol Heights Metro station has medical facilities and eateries to support the community. The Washington Redskins football stadium is just to the east of Capitol Heights, near the Capital Beltway (I-95/495) and Hampton Mall shopping center which features a hotel and eateries. The town borders Washington, D.C., and has a zip code of 20743.

Capitol Heights has been designated as a "Gateway to the Nation's Capital" by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. With its own Metro Station, the Town borders Washington, D.C., Seat Pleasant, MD and District Heights, MD and offers excellent marketplace opportunities for goods and services of all descriptions. Capitol Heights is governed by a Town Council composed of a Mayor and six Council Members. The Mayor and Council are elected at-large for a four-year term. The town administrator, hired by the Council, serves full-time as the chief executive officer of the Town. The Town of Capitol Heights is a relatively compact municipality with 4,337 (2010 Census) residents. Known for its highly affordable quality of life, Capitol Heights is conveniently located approximately 35 miles from both Annapolis and Baltimore with excellent highway systems connecting to both cities. According to the 2010 Census, 92.8% of residents living in the Town were Black/African American and 4.8% were White. The remaining 2.4% of residents living in tbe Town were distributed between American Indian/Alaska Native (0.3%), Asian (0.4%), Asian Indian (0.2%), Chinese (0.1%), and others (1.8%).[7]

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[6] Demographics-Capitol Heights. http://www.capitolheightsmd.com/doing-business/demographics. Accessed Oct. 27, 2015.

In terms of education, 35.1% of the population are high school graduates and 15.6% have Bachelor's degrees. 79.6% are homeowners and 20.4% are renters. Household types are noted as 73.3% family and 26.7% non-family. There are 1,603 total housing units, 1,441 occupied, and 162 vacant.[8]

As of the census of 2010, there were 4,337 people, 1,482 households, and 1,040 families residing in the town. The population density was 5,421.3 inhabitants per square mile. There were 1,622 housing units at an average density of 2,027.5 per square mile. The racial makeup of the town was 3.3% White, 91.3% African American, 0.3% Native American, 0.1% Asian, 3.1% from other races, and 1.9% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 5.4% of the population. There were 1,482 households of which 42.0% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 34.0% were married couples living together, 28.4% had a female householder with no husband present, 7.8% had a male householder with no wife present, and 29.8% were non-families. 25.1% of all households were made up of individuals and 7.3% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.92 and the average family size was 3.48. The median age in the town was 34.9 years. 27.3% of residents were under the age of 18; 10.3% were between the ages of 18 and 24; 27.3% were from 25 to 44; 26.1% were from 45 to 64; and 9.1% were 65 years of age or older. The gender makeup of the town was 46.0% male and 54.0% female. According to the 2000 Census, the median income for a household in the town was $46,667, and the median income for a family was $53,826. Males had a median income of $36,950 versus $35,225 for females. The per capita income for the town was $18,932. About 9.3% of families and 11.4% of the population were below the poverty line, including 15.8% of those under age 18 and 9.6% of those age 65 or over.

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[7] Demographics-Capitol Heights. http://www.capitolheightsmd.com/doing-business/demographics. Accessed Oct. 27, 2015.

[8] Demographics-Capitol Heights. http://www.capitolheightsmd.com/doing-business/demographics. Accessed Oct. 27, 2015.

Capitol Heights, a chapter of Prince George's County Boys and Girls Club, supports the youth with after-school programs and athletic programs, along with mentoring boys and girls. The Capitol Heights conflict-mediation program focuses on resolving differences between youths in the area. Capitol Heights is a part of the Prince George's County Public Schools system. Within Capitol Heights there are five elementary schools, two middle schools, three high schools, and one academy (elementary and middle).

The Community Sustainability/Revitalization Plan focuses on transforming the Town into a sustainable community. This Plan identifies development opportunities and direct development and redevelopment efforts in a manner that is consistent with the Maryland Department of Planning's Principles of Smart Growth, as well as, the County's vision for the Sub-region 4 Master Plan while preserving existing neighborhoods and highlighting the will of the citizens and the elected officials of the Town.[9]

The Mayor and Council have recognized the need to prioritize planning efforts in the Town of Capitol Heights. The Town has seen limited growth in recent years, and many of the Town's assets are not being utilized to their fullest capacity. This plan will provide a clear and concise guide for revitalization of the Town.

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[9] Demographics-Capitol Heights. http://www.capitolheightsmd.com/doing-business/demographics. Accessed Oct. 27, 2015.

The Sanctuary is a "commuter" church as well a "community" church as the majority of our members and visitors reside in Washington Metropolitan Area cities bordering Capitol Heights, to include Washington, DC., Bowie, Upper Marlboro, and Fort Washington. Washington, D.C., formally the District of Columbia and commonly referred to as Washington, "the District", or simply D.C., is the capital of the United States.

Membership at The Sanctuary can be estimated as follows: 14% age 1-17 years old; 15% age 60+ years old; 16% age 18-25 years old; 26% age 46-59 years old; and 29% age 25-45 years old.[10]

Synergy

The exercise of documenting my Spiritual Autobiography and examining my Context has been very enlightening. There is the realization that both my personal history and the history of my church have intersected in a very unique way that can now facilitate further ministry study and development. Specifically, as my Contextual Analysis reflects a basking in the joys of church growth in buildings and numbers, this growth has not included a structured new member's assimilation process. Contributing factors have been the lack of ministry assessment, ministry training, documentation, and accountability. My understanding of the need for organization and structure in one's personal life and in one's church allows me to facilitate a call to action. A call to identify opportunities for The Sanctuary to better demonstrate the love of Christ, show ourselves friendly, edify the saints, be a good steward of ministry, and to do it all decently and in order. One such opportunity is the establishment of a Ministry Development Team with the charge of collaborating with ministries to develop a New Member's Assimilation Process, assessing current ministry practices, developing new practices, documenting all practices in manuals, training all ministries involved in the process, and monitoring the assimilation process.

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[10] The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square Membership Records.

When one looks at the principles of team leadership in the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys, insights about ministry development team leadership as it relates to ministry assimilation and membership retention become apparent. Author George Barno points out how Paul in Ephesians 4:11-12 reveals his belief in team leadership as he gives advice to the church in Ephesus[11]. Paul writes, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers…" (Eph 4:11). Scholars note that in this passage, Paul points out that each member is gifted to a different aspect of ministry as well as to different types of leadership. This passage suggests to me that a team of skilled individuals could effectively lead the effort to develop, implement, and monitor a new member's assimilation process.

At The Sanctuary many new members are either joining ministries shortly after joining the church or not joining any ministry at all. My personal and spiritual experiences point to the significance of Spiritual Gift Assessments as an effective means of facilitating spiritual growth and member connectivity. The Spiritual Gifts Assessment helps individuals identify their God-given gifts for living faithfully as Christian disciples day by day and find meaningful ways to use their gifts in connection with others through the community of faith. The process helps people understand the nature of spiritual gifts and ways to enhance the effectiveness of their gifts by linking together with others.[12] 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 tells us,

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[11] George Barna, *The Power Of Team Leadership: Finding Strength in Shared Responsibility* (Colorado Springs, CO: Water Brook Press, 2001), 31-35.

> "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

In his book entitled *Stop the Church's Revolving Door: Building Relationships With Church Members*, Richard Wright poses the question, "Does your church have a revolving door?" Unfortunately, our church does and the challenge addressed in this project is how to stop it. Wright confirms that most churches do not have a ministry to establish and maintain authentic personal relationships with inactive members, visitors, or prospective members.

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[12] Spiritual Gifts – The United Methodist Church. www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.8051415. Accessed Oct. 2, 2013.

While The Sanctuary has evolved physically and numerically and powerful preaching and teaching continues to draw people, the ‘revolving door’ concept seems to be a challenge. People are visiting and joining but not necessarily connecting with the body of Christ, becoming involved in ministry, growing spiritually, or remaining a member. Thus, as The Sanctuary strives to remain relevant, it will need to find ways to assimilate and retain new members.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The biblical foundations is designed to present an Old Testament pericope and a New Testament pericope that have been studied and are related to this project topic. Herein lies the problem being addressed by this project: Although The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square has seen tremendous growth in terms of numbers and property, individual ministries have not been developed and structured to keep pace with the growing spiritual needs of the congregation. Thus, without there being an official new members assimilation process in place, new members have been joining the church and then leaving shortly thereafter without becoming connected to the ministry and allowed to operate in their spiritual gifts.

This project proposes to initiate a process which involves the development of ministries organized in such a way as to invite and equip new members to serve in accordance with their gifts, thus, retaining their membership. Ministries will be developed and new members assimilated into ministry because of delegation of authority from the pastor to smaller groups or ministry development teams. This project evolved from a desire to increase the effectiveness of new member assimilation, and involves using ministry development as a tool for new member assimilation. Specifically, it is proposed that a ministry development team is designated to develop the ministries by assessing current ministry practices, developing new practices, documenting practices in manuals, and training ministry members to assimilate new members. The ministry development team would also establish a new member's assimilation process.

According to Larry Osborne in his book entitled *The Sticky Church*, the greatest challenge facing most churches today is not getting people through the front door—it is keeping them from leaving through the back door. In his book, Osborne reveals what it takes to cultivate a sticky church and reveals the strategy of sermon-based small groups to retain members while leading your church into even deeper levels of discipleship.[1]

In *The Power of Team Leadership*, George Barna suggested ways in which the Bible endorses the value and significance of team-based leadership.[2] Here is Barna's account of Nehemiah: Throughout his campaign to restore the city walls, Nehemiah relied heavily upon teams of gifted individuals with complementary skills to facilitate the fulfillment of the vision God had given to him. At various times throughout the campaign, he organized different teams for divergent purposes. The walls would never have been built if he had relied upon a more traditional style of one-man leadership. Here is Barna's account of Jesus: It seem most sensible that to accomplish a spiritual end, Jesus would have turned to the people most interested in spirituality—the religious leaders of the day? And you would expect Him, given barely three years in public ministry, to pursue alliances with high-profile individuals whose resumes proved that they knew how to lead effectively? But, as usual, Jesus broke all the rules. He called upon a group of uneducated, low-key, ill-trained individuals whose character seemed pretty solid and who were willing to sacrifice whatever they had to in order to be apprentices to the master leader. Clearly, Jesus' intent was not to raise up eleven future hotshots whose stellar performances would wow the world, but rather to prepare a humble group whose limitations would force them to work together to complete the assignment He had given them while remaining focused on Him. Jesus was training teams of leaders, not potential members of the Future CEO Club.

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[1] Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008).

[2] George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership: Finding Strength in Shared Responsibility* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 31.

Here is Barna's account of Paul: On his missionary journeys, the most prolific of the apostles always traveled and ministered with a team. Whether it was in the company of Barnabas, John, Simeon, Lucius, or Manaen (Acts 13), serving with Timothy, Judas, or Silas (Acts 15-16), or ministering along-side various combinations of other leaders, Paul was the quintessential team player. His advice in Ephesians 4:12, "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up," remains one of the central challenges to the church to train laity to do the entire work of the ministry. His entries regarding spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12 and Rom 12) not only identify leadership as a core gift, but further suggest that rather than focus on one individual who can do it all, God's intent was to prepare each of us to be a role player, not a superhero.

Here is Barna's account of Moses (Exodus 18): Moses was a fascinating leader. Reluctant to lead from the start, he learned many leadership lessons the hard way. Two insights stand out about Moses and his involvement with teams. First, he clearly recognized that while God called him to lead, he was hampered by severe limitations and was reticent to take on such responsibility. His reaction was to ask God to provide him with colleagues who could compensate for bis overt weaknesses—that is, to let him lead as part of a team in which he would (by God's design) serve as the directing leader and captain of the team. In response, God provided other leaders, such as Joshua and Caleb, to share the burden.

According to Barna, our ministry principles and methods should be consistent with the Bible as evidenced in his study of the lives of God's chosen leaders portrayed in scripture. He says the Bible does not give a direct admonition to provide team-based leadership, but it does teach the value of community, unity, diversity, mutual trust, and the interrelationship of spiritual gifts—all aspects that lead to a team-based approach. Barna insists that the longer we deny the benefits of team leadership, the less likely it is that we will experience the power of God in the church, in society, or in our personal efforts. Barna reminds us that there is only one ministry superstar: Jesus Christ.

If we persist in seeking to lead churches through the display of talents and abilities resident within only a few unusually capable individuals, rather than allowing the community of believers to use their significant-but-less-inclusive leadership skills in an orchestrated unison to accomplish synergistic outcomes, the church and society will pay the price for such defiance.[3]

This section includes an exegesis of Exodus 18:13-27 which highlights Moses' example of effective leadership through delegation to smaller groups. In reference to this passage, Barry Werner on January 2, 2013 posted in *Exodus Leadership Principles, Personal Development Skills, Structure/Organization* that well-led organizations can accomplish more than any individual can hope to accomplish.[4]

Werner reflects on how Moses was overwhelmed by the problems of leading a large number of people and on how Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, helped Moses to see that organization and structure are essential to effective operation. Werner points out that not only is work accomplished more efficiently, but also people are better served and supported in doing the work. According to Werner, it did not take long for Moses to discover that effective leaders create a structure that nurtures the health of the team they lead. Werner poses the question, "But how many organizations are anything but organized?" He insists that some successful business people purposely keep their operations very small or they work alone because they feel that bigger is anything but better; however, that does not have to be the case. Werner makes this point by explaining how Moses created a structured organization by hand picking potential leaders, training them and empowering them—the lesson being that key leaders can still maintain control in crisis situations or when difficult problems arise. Werner went on to explain that Moses held the position of final arbiter and how through effective delegation a leader can multiply his or her effectiveness and better meet the needs of those who require personal attention.

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[3] George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership: Finding Strength in Shared Responsibility.*

[4] Barry Werner, *Exodus Leadership Principles, Personal Development Skills, Structure /Organization*, accessed March 5, 2014, http://barrywerner.com/category/old-testament/exodus/.

Werner goes on to ask, "Are you experiencing some negative effects from the lack of structure in your organization? Do you feel like if you miss one day everytbing could fall apart or at least come to a stop? Are your people struggling from operational paralysis because all decisions are bottle-necked in your office? Do you have someone you can turn to in order to find help when the structure is creating an ineffective workplace?" Werner concludes that like Moses, leaders desiring to become more effective need not be threatened but rather must be approachable, seek counsel, and do whatever it takes to correct their structure and organizational problems.

This section also includes an exegesis of Ephesians 4:7-16 which points out that Jesus has given leaders a model for equipping people to serve in accordance with their gifts. In his posting on April 19, 2007 in "Edification, Scripture, Spirit/Holy Spirit, Spiritual Gifts," Alan Knox argues from the basic structure of the Greek sentence that Paul was not specifying a special group of five leaders whose job was to equip the church.[5] Knox points out that Paul begins this section of Ephesians (Ch. 4), by encouraging believers to deal with one another in humility, and gentleness and patience in order to maintain the unity. What unity is Paul talking about? He explains that we are united in one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. This is the foundation of our unity. From this starting point of unity, Paul writes Ephesians 4:7-16.

According to Barna, most leadership in today's churches comes from solo practitioners—individuals who bear the burden of providing all the direction the ministry they direct requires. Inevitably, this results not only in burned-out leaders, but underutilized lay people who merely attend and observe rather than becoming actively engaged in ministry, growing in discipleship, and freeing professional staff to focus on pastoral priorities.[6]

The Conclusion of this section summarizes these biblical principles for using ministry development as a tool for new member assimilation.

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[5] Alan Knox, "Edification, Scripture, Spirit/Holy Spirit, Spiritual Gifts," *The Assembling of the Church*, accessed March 5, 2014, http://www.alanknox.net/2012/04/.

[6] Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership*, 31-35.

Old Testament

Research has shown that smaller groups can become a valuable method of developing ministries that will facilitate new members being assimilated into the church. For instance, a classic example of this method is seen in Exodus 18:13-27 (MSG):

> The next day Moses took his place to judge the people. People were standing before him all day long, from morning to night. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What's going on here? Why are you doing all this, and all by yourself, letting everybody line up before you from morning to night?" Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me with questions about God. When something comes up, they come to me. I judge between a man and his neighbor and teach them God's laws and instructions." Moses' father-in-law said, "This is no way to go about it. You'll burn out, and the people right along with you. This is way too much for you—you can't do this alone. Now listen to me. Let me tell you how to do this so that God will be in this with you. Be there for the people before God, but let the matters of concern be presented to God. Your job is to teach them the rules and instructions, to show them how to live, what to do. And then you need to keep a sharp eye out for competent men—men who fear God, men of integrity, men who are incorruptible—and appoint them as leaders over groups organized by the thousand, by the hundred, by fifty, and by ten. They'll be responsible for the everyday work of judging among the people. They'll bring the hard cases to you, but in the routine cases they'll be the judges. They will share your load and that will make it easier for you. If you handle the work this way, you'll have the strength to carry out whatever God commands you, and the people in their settings will flourish also." Moses listened to the counsel of his father-in-law and did everything he said. Moses picked competent men from all Israel and set them as leaders over the people who were organized by the thousand, by the hundred, by fifty, and by ten. They took over the everyday work of judging among the people. They brought the hard cases to Moses, but in the routine cases they were the judges. Then Moses said good-bye to his father-in-law who went home to his own country.

There is full support for the use of small groups to develop ministries and to assimilate new members into the body of Christ. *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* helps us understand the background of this concept:

> The book of Exodus is an episode on the larger story of the Pentateuch. The background to the events in the book is the divine promise of descendants and land to the ancestors (Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph) in Genesis (e.g., Gn 12:1-4; 13:14-17). The book opens by recalling the divine promise to

> these ancestors, stating that the family of Jacob had grown into a great nation, fulfilling one aspect of the divine promise (1:7). But Israel's vast population in the land of Egypt, not Canaan, threatens the pharaoh, prompting oppression and even genocide. The result is paradoxical for Israel at the outset of the exodus: The partial fulfillment of the divine promise creates suffering, not blessing. The concept of divine power is explored, for the most part, in the setting of the land of Egypt (1:1-15:21). Israel's journey with God from Egypt to the promised land of Canaan (15:22-40:38) in the wilderness develops the theme of divine presence. Moses, the central human character in the book, provides counterpart to the divine epic of war and revelation. His development is traced from Israel's savior in escaping Egypt to Israel's mediator during the revelation of the Law on Sinai. Exodus 2-5 introduces Moses, noting his lack of identity (he is both an Egyptian and an Israelite), his good intentions (he wishes to help his people Israel), and his violent nature (he kills an Egyptian). Moses' early experience with the Midianites in the wilderness foreshadows Israel's experience in the second half of the book. He is called by the Lord at the mountain of God (chs. 3-4). He returns to Egypt to mediate for the Lord in confronting Pharaoh (chs. 5-12). In the process, Moses emerges as the liberator of Israel, leading them in their march from Egypt (ch.13) and even through the Red Sea (ch. 14). Moses' mediatorial role is developed during the revelation of the Law (chs. 19-24) and in the construction of the tabernacle (chs. 25-40). Through repeated trips to the summit of the mountain, Moses models the offices of priest, prophetic teacher, and scribe as he purifies Israel, teaches the people the covenant, and records divine Law.[7]

We find in this passage that the people now accept Moses' counsel as the Lord's counsel and look to Moses for wisdom. Scholars note three detrimental effects resulted from Moses' acting as judge over everything, everyone, and all situations common-place, religious, and legal, he was overworked, the people did not receive justice quickly, and the elders were deprived of the opportunity to use their talents.[8] Scholars expound on these points in the *Pulpit Commentary* as follows:

> Verses 14–23 - *The unwisdom of a monopoly of power.* The principle of the division of labor, which is essential to progress in the arts, was well known in Egypt, and was applied there, not to the arts only, but also to government and administration. Moses, who had resided forty years at the court of a Pharaoh (Acts 7:23), must have been thoroughly acquainted with the fact that, in a well-ordered community, judicial functions were separated from legislative and administrative, and entrusted to a large number of persons, not monopolized by a single

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[7] *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha.*

[8] *New Spirit Filled Life Bible* (KJV).

individual. But it had appeared to him that the condition of his own people was exceptional. Just released from the cruel bondage of a hard and pitiless slavery, without education, without habits of command or self-control, without any knowledge of the principles of law or experience in the practice of courts, they seemed to him unfit for the exercise of the judicial office—especially as he understood it. For his view was, that each particular decision should be made an occasion of educating the people in the principles of law and justice (verse 16), and upon these it was his habit to descant in connection with each judgment that he delivered. As he felt that he alone among all the Israelites was equal to this task, he had undertaken to discharge singly the office of judge in a community consisting of above two millions of persons. Jethro, on visiting him, was struck with the unwisdom of such an attempt, and honestly gave expression to his feelings. Jethro saw:

1. That to monopolize the judicial function in so large a community was unwise, as an undue strain upon the mental and physical powers of the monopolizer. So numerous were the causes brought before him that Moses had to sit "from morning to evening"—probably from early dawn until the dusk of the evening twilight—hearing them. At eighty years of age, or more (7:7), his physical strength was not equal to this exertion. Our physical powers have to be considered. No one is justified in overtaxing them unnecessarily. The hody needs change of attitude and employment, air, gentle exercise, freedom from restraint, confinement, and tension. No one could habitually sit at any one task for twelve hours continuously without its telling on his hodily frame and injuring his constitution. Again, the mental strain must have been injurious to him, and if not actually impairing his faculties, must have interfered with their due exercise and rendered him unfit to perform the delicate duties of a judge late in the day. Had necessity been laid upon him, had God appointed him to be the sole judge of the people, or had there actually been no one else among the Israelites competent to the performance of any part of the work, he would have been right in acting as he did, for health is not the first consideration; but this was not so. God had not spoken upon the point; and there was an abundance of men in the congregation, quite competent to perform minor judicial functions, as Jethro clearly perceived, and as he himself also saw when it was pointed out to him. Thus he was exhausting himself unnecessarily, a proceeding which cannot be justified.

2. That it was also unwise, as unduly taxing the patience of the people. One man could not keep pace with the number of constantly arising causes, which must have tended to accumulate, whence would arise a delay of justice. It was inconvenient enough to have to wait from the morning until the evening before obtaining a hearing; but probably the case was not uncommon of a cause being put off to the next court-day, which, if the people were on the march, might he several days distant. The convenience of suitors is an important consideration in the administration of justice, which should he prompt as well as sure, to content men's natural sense of what is fitting.

> 3. That, further, it tended to cramp the exercise by the people of powers, which they possessed, and the employment of which would have elevated them. There were in Israel and will always be in every community, "able men," well fitted to take part in the decision of causes. Such men will commonly be very numerous; and if they have no part in the administration of justice, a large section of the community will at once be dissatisfied with the slight passed upon them, and debarred from an employment which would have tended to their moral education and elevation. The jury system of modern states is a recognition of the fact, that judicial capacity is widely spread, and that society ought to provide a field for its exercise. It is important to utilize the powers possessed by all members of the community, both for their own contestation and for the general welfare of the community itself. The world is over-full of despots and monopolists, persons who desire to grasp as much power as possible, and are unwilling to share their office with others. We may acquit Moses of such selfishness; but we cannot acquit all those who follow in his footsteps. It would be well if persons in positions of authority nowadays sought generally to associate others in their work—to call out latent talent, exercise it, and so educate its possessors.[9]

John C. Maxwell points out the solution to this problem in *The Maxwell Leadership Bible* as he introduces "The Law of Reproduction: The Day Moses Became a Leader." Maxwell insists that:

> Something revolutionary happened after Jethro confronted Moses over his leadership methods: Moses moved from merely ministering, to leading. Instead of doing all the judging himself, he released other leaders to join him and lead according to their gifts. At this point, according to Maxwell, the government of Israel grew exponentially. Moses had reproduced himself. In order to do so, he had to change both his way of thinking and his way of working. Maxwell explains how Moses made seven changes to become a leader:
>
> 1. He became a man of prayer (v. 19).
> 2. He committed himself to communication (v. 20).
> 3. He laid out the vision (v. 20).
> 4. He developed a plan (v. 20).
> 5. He selected and trained the leaders (v. 21).

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[9] H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., "Exodus," in *The Pulpit Commentary,* vol. 2 (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls Company).

6. He released them to do the work (v. 22).
7. He did only what they could not do (v. 22).[10]

In verse 23, Maxwell points out that when Moses changed, God supplied strength for Moses and peace for the people.

In his article on "Lessons in Leadership Exodus 17-18," Reverend Bruce Goettsche points out that by looking at Moses, the leader, we can learn things we must never forget. Reverend Goettsche also insists that every leader needs help from time to time. Below are lessons learned from this passage of scripture according to Goettsche:

> Twice in these chapters, we see Moses in need of help. First, we see it during the battle. Moses is unable to hold his hands up for that long. The blood rushes out of his arms and they begin to hurt and then go numb. So, Moses has to pull his hands down and rest. But whenever Moses took down his hands, the Amalekites gained power of Israel. So, Moses has to rely on Aaron and Hur. They have Moses sit on a rock and then they hold up his arms for him. These men came and gave Moses the strength he did not have in Himself.
>
> Leaders need those who hold them up in the times when they are overwhelmed. At times every leader gets a little burned out and run down. The pressure wears on them and they wonder if they are doing any good at all. It doesn't matter what your position . . . at times, every leader gets discouraged. At these times a leader needs those who:
>
> - Will lift them up in prayer
> - Will encourage them by telling them specifically the good they are doing
> - Will take some of the responsibility on their shoulders
> - Will make sure the leader takes the time necessary for themselves
>
> But there is a second lesson in chapter 18. Here we read about the visit of Moses' father-in-law. We are not sure when Zipporah and the boys left the company of Egypt. But now they return and bring Dad with them. Moses tells Jethro about all the things that God has done and Jethro shares His joy. (It's wonderful when someone will rejoice with us rather than rain on our parade.)
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> The next day Moses goes back to work and Jethro observes. When the day is over, Jethro has some advice on how Moses can do his job better. Moses could have said, "Look, Jethro, you are experienced with sheep but you don't know

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[10] *The Maxwell Leadership Bible* (KJV).

anything about leading this group of people." He could have said, "Look you've been here one day and you're going to tell me how to lead this group that I have been leading for two months!" Or maybe he could have said, "Look, if God doesn't like the way I'm doing things, He can tell me Himself or get someone else!" The wise leader realizes that wise counsel often comes from the most unlikely places. The best thing a leader can do is stop being defensive every time someone makes a suggestion that doesn't agree with them. Learning from others is not a sign of weakness . . . it is a sign of wisdom.

Wise leaders work to surround themselves with people who will counsel them and will tell them the truth, even if it stings. The best friends a leader has are those who will tell them when,

- They have separated themselves from accountability
- They are using funds in a questionable manner
- They have gotten bogged down with things they shouldn't be involved in
- They are doing damage to their home life or health
- They are playing with sin
- They are using their time poorly

Practically this means,

1. Leaders need to recognize that they can't do it by themselves. They need help. We all want to appear competent and capable, but if you give people the idea that you don't need their help . . . .you won't have their help!
2. Leaders need to learn to listen to those around them. The best wisdom often comes from the most unlikely places. That wisdom may come from a child, it may come from a grandparent. It may come from an opponent or a friend; a co-worker or someone you've never met before. A wise leader is one who is willing to be led.

The last lesson for leaders is perhaps the hardest one. It is the importance of sharing the load of ministry. We are told that Jethro watched Moses work for a day. We are told that the people lined up all day long to bring their matters to Moses for judgment. One would imagine that there were domestic issues, property issues, and interpersonal conflicts brought to Moses. All day long Moses dealt with these issues. By the end of his long day he was exhausted. Jethro recommends that Moses set up a series of judges and then have only the most difficult cases sent to him. This, according to Jethro would free Moses to concentrate on teaching the people the ways of God. In other words, Jethro suggests that Moses delegate some of the responsibility. It is surprising how hard a thing this is to do. And I think there are several reasons it is so hard.

- We live in a society that equates overwork with significance. Leaders fear that if they give some of their work to others they will appear to be lazy.
- Leaders want to be "in control." You've seen it, there is a task, and one person feels they have to be involved in every decision. Why? It's a desire to be in control. It makes them feel important. Good leaders need to remind themselves that the desire to be "in control" is that same thing as wanting to "be like God." And that's sin.
- Leaders find that it is easier to do the job themselves. And do you know what? It often is easier to do the job yourself! But the question is not, "what is easiest?" it's "what is best?" Anyone who starts to work with computers wonders how in the world a computer could possibly make us more productive. At the beginning there is all kinds of aggravation and frustration. But once you learn how to use the computer, it is amazing what a great tool it can be. Sometimes training others takes time . . . but in the long run, it will free the leader to do other things.

There were several things that Jethro understood.

- Jethro understood that no one can do everything. . . for very long. Maybe you remember the old story about the football game where one team came out on the field to play the coach of the other team. The coach felt he knew the plays better, he knew the technique better, he understood the other team better. So . . . it only made sense that he should be the one to go out on the field. The coach got the ball first and made a valiant effort to run the ball back. But he was tackled hard. He tried to run the ball but never got anywhere. By the time the first series of plays was over the coach could barely get up. Many leaders are like that. They are talented but they are just one person. They try to do everything but before long the demands bury them. They burn out and leave the leadership position feeling defeated. Jethro told Moses, "You will wear yourself out. The work is too heavy for you. You cannot handle it alone" (18:18).
- Jethro also understood that a leader should focus on what he or she can do uniquely. If they don't, the important things will get lost in the shuffle. It

> wasn't that Moses wasn't busy. He certainly was. But in his busyness he didn't have time to listen and learn from the Lord. Jethro doesn't tell Moses to stop acting as a judge . . . instead he tells him to concentrate on the cases that are appealed. This will free Moses to teach the people the "decrees of God and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform" (v. 21). Good leaders know that things that others can do are things others *should* do. This frees the leader to do the things they are called to do.
>
> - Jethro also understood that delegation gives others the chance to know the joy of serving. A shared ministry is a strong ministry.
> - Jethro understood that delegated leadership is more efficient and effective leadership. In verse 23 we read, "If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied."[11]

In addition to addressing the need to develop leaders to provide assistance to the pastor in order for ministries to be prepared to assimilate new members (as illustrated in Exodus), this project identifies a ministry development team, which assesses the structure, organization, and effectiveness of individual ministries to ensure readiness to receive and nurture new members. The ministry development team also facilitates the establishment of relationships with new members, demonstrates hospitality, and equips new members to serve in the Body of Christ in accordance with their spiritual gifts. An example of this method is seen in Ephesians 4:7-16.

New Testament

> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no

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[11] Bruce Goettsche, "Union Church, A Small Church Town: A Worldwide Message," accessed March 7, 2014, www.unionchurch.com.

> longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Eph 4:7-16 NIV).

According to John Maxwell in the *Maxwell Leadership Bible*,

> Some consider this epistle to be the most profound work in the Bible. The apostle Paul wrote Ephesians while in prison. In it he covers the whole panorama of God's redemptive work—from before the foundation of the world to its consummation in the fullness of Christ. Clearly, Paul casts a huge vision for followers of Jesus. Paul describes his vision in the first half of the letter, paving the way for application in the second half. Once someone catches Paul's vision, the only logical response is to "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (4:1).[12]

Maxwell further points out what we can learn from this grand work of Ephesians:

> First, Ephesians classically illustrates a leader who first casts a vision for the big picture before he calls the people to act. Paul knew that his readers would better obey when they simply responded to a huge initiative from God. Second, Paul uses the metaphor of a human body to help leaders and followers better understand the church. He calls Christ the "head," while he calls followers the "body." What a wonderful picture of leadership! Just as a "head cannot accomplish anything apart from the hands, feet, eyes, ears, etc., so a leader cannot accomplish any goal without each part of the team contributing to the whole. In the same way that Jesus enables us to act on His vision for the world, so the leader enables the followers to act on the organizational vision. Third, Paul recognizes the diversity of the body of Christ and calls for unity in the midst of variety. Good leaders always do this. There may he one goal or vision, but a variety of gifts must he tapped to accomplish it. Paul attempts to build a team out of disparate believers: pastors, teachers, apostles, prophets, and evangelists. Any good coach wants every player to flourish. This can happen only when tasks match abilities. Players must find their correct positions.[13]

Finally, Maxwell notes that Paul warns of hardship. He does not want to scare his readers, but to prepare them for battle. He soberly tells them what to expect in the coming spiritual warfare. This, too, is good leadership. In explaining God's role in Ephesians,

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[12] *The Maxwell Leadership Bible* (KJV).

[13] *The Maxwell Leadership Bible* (KJV).

Maxwell states that Paul and God work hand in hand; both play a leadership role. God is the Head Coach who furnishes church members with a position of authority, then provides them with gifts and positions. Paul follows God's leadership as an assistant coach, equipping the people to use their gifts in service. He instructs the people to find their calling and pursue it. Finally, both God and Paul equip the reader to engage in battle. God provides the armor, Paul the instructions to use it.

The Message Bible highlights the concept of using God-given gifts to train Christ's followers in Ephesians 4:10-16 this way:

> He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ. No prolonged infancies among us please. We'll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are an easy mark for impostors. God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth, and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love.

In the *Holman Bible Handbook*, David Dockery insists that maturity is defined totally in relationship to the corporate Christian body and explains that:

> All of these gifted people carry out equipping ministries so that service ministries can be actualized. Or as Paul put it, "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith" (4:12–13). Paul stated the goal of the church in 4:13–16. The church is to grow up in Christ so it will avoid spiritual immaturity, instability, and gullibility. The atmosphere of spiritual maturity is described in terms of truth and love (4:15). Maturity is an ongoing process of being "joined and held together" in relationship with the body of Christ.[14]

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[14] David S. Dockery, *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary expounds on the intention of the gifts as follows:[15]

> The purpose of the gifted believers (vv. 7–11) is to equip other believers for the ministry so as to give them stability doctrinally and practically and thus lead them to mutual edification. Like several other passages in Ephesians (1:3–14, 15–23; 2:1–7; 3:1–13, 14–19; 4:1–7; 6:14–20), 4:11–16 is one long sentence in Greek.
>
> 4:12. The purpose of the gifted men is to prepare God's people for works of service. More literally, this purpose is "for the perfecting or equipping (*katartismon;* cf. the verb *katartizō* in Mt 4:21, 'mending' or 'preparing' nets; in Gal 6:1, 'restore' for proper use; cf. 2 Cor 13:11; Heb. 13:21) of the saints unto the work of the ministry" (*diakonias*). Gifted people (Eph 4:11) are to minister the Word to others so that they in turn are readied to get involved in ministering to others (cf. 2 Tm 2:2). The goal of all this is the building up or edifying of the body of Christ (cf. Eph 4:16). This shows that all saints and not just a few leaders should be involved in the "ministry." All saints are gifted (v. 7) to serve others spiritually.
>
> 4:13. Gifted people are to minister till all the church attains (reach translates *katantēsōmen*, used in Acts of travelers arriving at their destinations) the three goals, each introduced by the Greek preposition (*eis*, "unto"): literally, (1) "unto the unity of the faith (cf. Eph 4:5) and full knowledge (*epignōseōs;* cf. 1:17) of the Son of God," (2) "unto a mature man," and (3) "unto the measure (*metron;* cf. 4:7, 16) of the stature of the fullness of Christ." As each believer functions in accord with the gift(s) Christ has given him (v. 7) the body as a whole enjoys unity (cf. vv. 3–6) and becomes more spiritually mature (cf. v.15), more like Jesus Christ in all His fullness (cf. 1:23; 3:19).
>
> 4:14–16. Here Paul expressed the ultimate purpose, or perhaps better, the result (*hina*) of gifted people equipping saints to serve the Lord and others. Negatively, believers should not be like immature infants who are easily swayed and confused, like waves being tossed back and forth (cf. Lk 8:24; Jas 1:6) and blown here and there (lit., "whirled around," a violent swinging that makes one dizzy) by every gust of wind of teaching … by the cunning, better, "trickery" (*kybeia*, lit., "dice-playing") of men in their deceitful scheming (*panourgia*, also used in Lk 20:23; 1 Cor 3:19; 2 Cor 4:2; 11:3), moving toward (*pros* indicates goal) a system of error. False teachers cause this kind of confusion regarding the truth in order to try to bring believers into their erroneous schemes. In contrast (*de*, Eph 4:15) Paul stated positively that by speaking the truth in love (lit., "truthing in love," which has the idea of maintaining truth in love in both speech and life) believers may grow up into Him with reference to all things. Christ, then, is the Source of a believer's growth and also the Aim and Goal of his growth (cf. v. 13). From the Head (cf. 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18) the body derives its whole capacity for growth and activity (Eph 4:16). Each member of the body is joined (2:21) by

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[15] John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1989).

> being carefully fitted together, and each member is held or brought together by means of every supporting ligament (cf. Col 2:19) according to the standard (*kata*, with the accusative) of the measured working (*metrō*, from *metron*) of each individual. This causes the body of Christ to grow (cf. Eph 4:15) and build itself up (cf. v. 12) in love. The phrase "in love" occurs three times (vv. 2, 15–16), thus pointing to the way unity is maintained. Significantly the word "measure" (*metron*) is also used three times in this context (vv. 7, 13, 16). Each believer is to function in Christ's body by God's enabling grace in accord with the measure of the gift Christ bestowed on him (v. 7). When each believer accomplishes that measure, then the church grows properly (v. 16), coming ultimately to the measure of Christlikeness (v. 13). Stunted growth comes when one does not allow his or others' gifts to function.
>
> The preservation of unity is the responsibility of God's gifted people in the church (vv. 7–16). In this unity of structure is variety of function. Paul emphasized body growth, not self-growth. Each individual contributes to this unified growth as he allows his particular gift(s) to function.

This Ephesians passage of scripture demonstrates what Robert Schnase refers to as radical hospitality in his book entitled *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. According to Schnase, vibrant, fruitful, growing congregations practice radical hospitality and out of genuine love for Christ and for others, their laity and pastors take the initiative to invite, welcome, include, and support newcomers and help them grow in faith as they become part of the Body of Christ. He says their members focus on those outside their congregation with as much passion as they attend to the nurture and growth of those who already belong to the family of faith, and they apply their utmost creativity, energy, and effectiveness to the task, exceeding all expectations. In this book, Christian hospitality refers to the active desire to invite, welcome, receive, and care for those who are strangers so that they find a spiritual home and discover for themselves the unending richness of life in Christ. Schnase speaks of hospitality as a mark of Christian discipleship, a quality of Christian community, a concrete expression of commitment to grow in Christ-likeness by seeing ourselves as part of the community of faith, "not to be served but to serve" (Mt 20:28).

Also in this chapter Schnase highlights Romans 15:7 which reads, "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." Schnase notes here how Paul encourages followers of Christ to practice hospitality and the grace received in Christ places upon Christians the joyful gift and challenging task of offering others the same welcome they themselves have received. Schnase further shares how the letter of Hebrews cautions, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb 13:2). Schnase insists that the people welcomed into a congregation may prove to be those individuals through whom God graces others' lives.

> As the community of faith receives and assimilates newcomers and accepts their spiritual gifts and natural talents, their life experiences and faith perspectives, the church changes and ministry expands. God uses newcomers to breathe new life into congregations.[16]

Ephesians 4:7-16 also demonstrates in Schnase's chapter entitled "The Practice of Intentional Faith Development:"

> The practice of intentional faith development matures our understanding and experience of Christ. No matter how dedicated our efforts, the transformation of human hearts and minds is God's work through the Holy Spirit, and intentionally learning in community is our way of placing ourselves in the hands of God so that God can sculpt our souls and recreate us in the image of Christ. The refreshing intimacy and companionship of fellow Christians learning together engrafts us into the Body of Christ and becomes a means of grace by which God awakens a heightened desire to love our neighbors.[17]

This Ephesians passage is further expounded on by Chuck Lawless in his article in *Ministry Today* entitled "Are Church Leaders Responsible for Church Members?" According to Lawless,

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[16] Robert Schnase, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 14.

[17] Schnase, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, 78.

Several times, the apostle Paul wrote about the church as the "body of Christ" (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:12; Eph 4:12; Col 1:24). While this image is only one of dozens of images of the church in the New Testament, it is a most helpful one. Thinking and applying this image properly should lead us to consider several implications for the church and church leadership:

1) The church is God's, not ours. This point is clear in 1 Corinthians 12. Everyone in the church is empowered by the same Spirit (vv. 6, 11). We were all baptized into God's body through the Spirit (v. 13). God arranges all of us in the body as He chooses (v. 18). He appoints leaders in the body (v. 28), and He can do so as He desires because the body is His body. This simple truth reminds us that while we may be the leaders, the story is not about us. God can, and will, raise up other leaders if we decide the church is ours.

2) We really are family. The body of Christ is genuinely family; even if we do not share a physical lineage. All of us hurt when one of us hurts; all rejoice when one rejoices (vv. 25-26). God somehow takes people who previously worshipped mute idols (vv. 2-3) and makes them part of His body. We then share the love so beautifully described in 1 Corinthians 13.

3) Every member matters. The body is made up of many members, but all of the members form one body (vv. 12-13). In fact, God gives spiritual gifts to each member of the body (vv. 4-11), and the body needs all the gifts. No person is insignificant in God's eyes. That means I must love even the church member who seemingly can give little in return.

4) The seemingly less significant need more attention, not less. It's easy to focus on only those members who are equipped, ready, and willing. Those less ready to serve require time and energy. On the other hand, Paul said that God gives attention needed to the "less presentable" so they fit well in the body. We must do the same. Sometimes the "less presentable" are that way because no one has given them time.

5) We must be comfortable with diversity. If everyone were an ear, there would be no body (vv. 17-19). We need ears, eyes, noses, and arms to be a body. Let's be honest, though: If I'm an ear, I'm more comfortable hanging out with others who are also ears. That kind of thinking only hinders the body.

6) Every member has a role in the body. He may be an eye, or she may be an ear—but each one has a purpose. This truth has huge ramifications for the church. Not only must we assume that each member has a purpose, but we must also help these members find their place in the body.

7) We learn to serve within the body. We have different gifts, but the same God grants these gifts (v. 4-11). By implication, we help one another recognize these gifts as we serve—that is, we do something—in the context of His body.

> The ear serves, others recognize and affirm his abilities and gifts, and he begins to see how he fits in the body. Hence, we must have in place a means to help people serve in entry-level positions. We must help them discover their giftedness.
>
> 8) We are responsible for uninvolved church members. I hear it all the time: "My church members just won't serve. They just won't get busy." Here's my response to that thought: If church members come to our churches and "only sit," they do so because we allow them to do so. They do so because we have not done our job as leaders to help them find their place of service and then hold them accountable.
>
> 9) We are responsible for overworked church members. We love the members who are committed to serving anywhere, anytime, doing anything. We appreciate the person who is willing to be an ear, an eye, a hand, a leg and a nose—perhaps all in the same week. Here's the problem, however: God does not intend for one church member to play all the roles. Our members get overworked, too, because we fail to lead our church to understand and live out New Testament "body life."[18]

When one looks at the principles of team leadership in the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys, insights about ministry development team leadership as it relates to ministry assimilation and membership retention become apparent. Author George Barno points out how Paul in Ephesians 4:11-12 reveals his belief in team leadership as he gives advice to the church in Ephesus. Paul writes, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers…" (Eph 4:11). Scholars note that in this passage, Paul points out that each member is gifted to a different aspect of ministry as well as to different types of leadership. This passage suggests to me that a team of skilled individuals could effectively lead the effort to develop, implement, and monitor a new member's assimilation process.

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[18] Chuck Lawless. "Are Church Leaders Responsible for Church Members," *Ministry Outreach*, accessed March 7, 2014, http://ministrytodaymag.com/index.php/ministry-outreach/246-church-growth/20531-are-church-leaders-responsible-for-church-members#sthash.IaGEIB8t.dpuf.

Lorenzo Arroyo notes that Ephesians 4:7-16 speaks to the call to ministry and he points out that the high calling of Christ is not for the purpose of individual accomplishment and recognition, but to be team members with the sole purpose of serving the whole body for the edification of all. Arroyo concludes that Jesus Christ has showered his church with an abundance of gifts that overflow into the seats and aisles of its ministry. May every believer answer his or her calling and mature in love to the building up of the whole body.[19]

The spiritual gifts assessment helps individuals identify their God-given gifts for living faithfully as Christian disciples day by day and find meaningful ways to use their gifts in connection with others through the community of faith. The process helps people understand the nature of spiritual gifts and ways to enhance the effectiveness of their gifts by linking together with others. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 tells us,

> Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will (KJV).

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[19] Lorenzo Arroyo, *Grace Communion International*, Glendora, CA.

Keith Krell states, "In 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Paul is going to tell you to unwrap your gift and use it to serve others." This is how Krell unwraps these verses on spiritual gifts:[20]

> Jesus is the validation of spirituality (12:1-3). Before Paul launches into his discussion on spiritual gifts, he wants to focus first on the common work of the Spirit in each one of our lives. In 12:1, Paul lays down a basic introduction to the paragraph and indeed the next three chapters. Paul indicates his concern that the Corinthians not be ignorant of certain truths about the things of the Spirit. Paul writes, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware." The phrase, "Now concerning," reminds us that Paul is responding to another question from the Corinthians. It is worth noting that the word "gifts" is in italics, meaning that it is not in the original text. Thus, the noun "spiritual" (pneumatikos) can be rendered "spiritual gifts," "spiritual persons," or "spiritual things." It is likely that "gifts" and "persons" were so closely connected in the Corinthians' minds that Paul used the word "spiritual" to imply both. Perhaps the question could be restated as follows: "Don't the spiritual gifts prove that we are spiritual persons?" Remember, the Corinthians were the most gifted church in the Scriptures while at the same time the most carnal church in the Scriptures. They were a church of divisions, immorality, and distortion in doctrine. This serves to remind us that a great spiritual gift is no indication of spirituality. It is possible to be gifted and not spiritual. In this case, the Corinthians were getting high on their spiritual giftedness instead of recognizing the source of the gift—Jesus Christ. As a result, Paul informs the Corinthians that he does not want them to be "unaware" or "ignorant." As we progress throughout chapters 12-14, we shall see that the Corinthians are emphasizing the gift of tongues above everything else. Therefore, Paul has to bring about order in the church and remind the Corinthians that all of God's people have gifts and all are equally valuable to the health and vitality of the church.
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> In 12:2-3, Paul discusses three different responses to Christ: the rejection of the pagan, the rejection of the Jew, and the faith of the Christian. Paul is clarifying who possesses the Spirit and who does not. In 12:2, Paul reminds the Corinthians of their idolatry during their pre-Christian lives. He writes, "You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led." Many of the Corinthian believers had been pagans. These Gentiles worshipped various idols that could not speak or help. A second response is the rejection of the Jews. In 12:3a, Paul writes, "Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed'" Here, Paul speaks of the typical response of the Jews. Not all of the Corinthians were Gentiles before believing in Christ…some were Jews who did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. The final response is found in 12:3b, where Paul writes, "…and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." To say that Jesus is "Lord" is to say that He is God. In the context of the Jewish world and the Old

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[20] Keith Krell, *Unity and Diversity*.

Testament, this confession essentially affirmed that Jesus was God. This was a counter-cultural assertion. A citizen of the Roman Empire was required to declare, "Caesar is Lord." But Christians who believed that Jesus was the only Lord couldn't say this. It was really a challenge to faith. Thus, Paul's point is this: No one can say that Jesus is Lord except through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a supernatural act.

Why does Paul bring up these three responses to Christ? He does so to refute the claims of those Corinthians who assume that they alone possessed the Spirit. Paul wants all of his readers to understand that salvation is the greater leveler. Every member of the Corinthian church who has trusted in Christ is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and is incredibly valuable to God. This is also true in our church today. If you have believed in Christ, it is because God did a supernatural work in your life. If you have not believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, please do so today.

Variety is the spice of church (12:4-11). In this section, there are three emphases: the source of our gifts, the goal of our gifts, and the distribution of our gifts. First, in 12:4-6, we will see the source of our gifts from the triune God. Paul writes, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons." Paul tells the Corinthians that there's not a single gift or even a one-size-fits-all box of gifts that believers are given. In these three verses, Paul uses the word translated "varieties" three times because God loves variety. Every snowflake, every set of fingerprints, every leaf on every tree, and every grain of sand is different from every other. God never makes an exact replica. Instead, God says we are wonderfully different from one another. And He encourages diversity in His church by gifting each one of us uniquely for ministry. Yet, in spite of this variety believers are united by the same God. Each member of the Trinity (the Tri-Unity of God) has a role in spiritual gifts: the Holy Spirit distributes the gifts, the Lord Jesus places people in ministry, and God the Father empowers people to do ministry. In light of these biblical truths, there are three responses.

First, you must discover what spiritual gift the Holy Spirit has given you (12:4). The Greek word for "gift" is charisma, from which we get our English words charisma and charismatic. The charis part of the word means "grace." The ma portion of the word is the passive suffix meaning that it is grace given. They are "grace gifts" that enable a person to glorify and serve God. The one who exercises his or her gifts could rightly be called charismatic. (So charismatic is not a name for just a few of the gifts.) These grace gifts are not earned; they are not the result of hard work; they are not even ones we choose for ourselves. And they may, or may not, be related to our natural skill set. Remember, God has not gifted you to do what you want to do; He has gifted you to do what He wants you to do. The grace gift(s) that God has chosen in His sovereignty to grant you are expressions of His love. In the exercise of your spiritual gift from God you will find fulfillment.

That is why the question, "What is my spiritual gift?" is so important. Unless you know the answer, you'll never be 100% effective in your service for

Jesus Christ. You may spend your life doing something for which you were not gifted by God and so be frustrated and ineffective. It is sort of like taking one of those big offensive linemen and putting him out at wide receiver. He cannot run and his hands are like bricks. But put him at left guard and he is right at home, because he was born to knock other men on their backside. In the same way, some people throw up when they are forced to go door-to-door witnessing. They are not gifted in evangelism. But put those same people over the finances and because they have the gift of administration, they are incredibly successful. There are others who could never get up and teach a class, but they know how to lead a small group because they have the gift of pastoring. Still others work behind the scenes caring for the sick, bringing over meals, and comforting those in sorrow. They have the gift of mercy, but do not ask them to speak in public. The very thought makes them break out in hives.

So take the time to discover your spiritual gift. Begin today by carrying out these four steps:

1) Pray specifically for God to reveal your gift.
2) Ask mature Christians who know you what strengths they see in you.
3) Look for open doors of opportunities to try different areas.
4) Follow the desires of your heart.

Second, you must plug into ministry (12:5). Jesus died to give you the gift (charisma) of eternal life, but He also died so that you could serve Him with your spiritual gift (charisma). When you and I fail to do so, we fail to carry out one of the purposes in His death. God has given you a spiritual gift to benefit others around you. That is why it is a tragedy if you don't know what your spiritual gift is, if you're not in the process of finding out what it is, or if you're not using your gift for the body. That means the body of Christ is not benefiting from your supernatural endowment. God wants to know, "Who is benefiting from the gift that I gave you?"

Now I need to state that the discovery of spiritual gifts flows out of service. Whenever you see God gift His people, it's because He has given them a task to perform, not vice versa. The problem is that we have a generation of Christians who sit, soak, and sour every week waiting for God to reveal their gifts to them before they get busy serving. These people will never discover their gifts. Instead of "gift-hunting" these folks need to be "Spirit-hunting." What is more important than serving in the area of your spiritual gift? The answer is simple: exhibiting a servant's heart. This means showcasing initiative and reliability.

It is also worth pointing out that one of the greatest pleasures in this life is serving others. Research indicates that serving has an overwhelmingly positive impact on one's spiritual growth. Furthermore, church members state that serving others has brought them as much or more joy than other spiritual disciplines. I would also add to this research my own conclusion that the only people who are ever fulfilled or content in a local church are those that are actively serving.

> Third, you must depend upon God for the results (12:6). The Father Himself is responsible for the variety of effects. Literally, the word is "energizings." That means, logically, that we are not responsible. It takes a great weight off of us when we are trying to serve the Lord in ministry. What we are called to is faithfulness in exercising our gifts in the places where Christ directs us. Then God takes full responsibility for the eternal impact.
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> Is it possible for someone to walk in the Spirit without exercising his or her gift? Absolutely not. The Holy Spirit will reveal Himself in a special way through you, through the exercise of your gift. To refuse to use your gift is to say "No" to the Holy Spirit and to deprive His church of blessings. Many of us have underestimated the consequences of refusing to serve in our personal lives. God disciplines His children for a lack of participation. Therefore, unwrap your gift and use it to serve others.

This biblical principle of identifying and encouraging the use of spiritual gifts was incorporated into my project, as it is an effective model that remains relevant for churches in the 21st century.

Conclusion

In agreement with Richard Wright, building relationships is essential to stopping the revolving door. Wright poses the question "Does your church have a revolving door?" Most churches do not have a ministry to establish and maintain authentic personal relationships with inactive members, visitors, or prospective members.[21]

Larry Osborne states, "If the back door of a church is left wide open, it doesn't matter how many people are coaxed to come in the front door—or the side door, for that matter. Yet, most churches give the back door scant attention. Our churches need to be stickier. Stickier churches are healthier churches. They not only draw in spiritual window-shoppers and lead them to Christ; they also grow them up to maturity."[22]

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[21] Richard M. Wright, *Stop the Church's Revolving Door: Building Relationships with Church Members* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2011).

[22] Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 13.

This approach is biblical and is demonstrated in this project. It is further believed that this project model of using ministry development as a tool for new member assimilation will have a profound impact on the effectiveness of ministry at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square and can be replicated in other churches to develop ministries and equip the saints to serve.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

While many 21st century churches have focused on building projects, generating ministries, and doing church, new members have not been effectively assimilated into the life of the church. Many newcomers have become new members who have joined churches, which lack an official process to effectively involve them in ministry. Therefore, after a short while, the new member leaves the church without developing meaningful relationships and without being equipped to serve; an all too familiar scenario, which highlights the ever-growing problem of declining church membership retention rates. A solution to this problem, as presented in this project, is the pastor designating a ministry development team to prepare ministries to receive new members and to establish a new member's assimilation process. An effective new member's assimilation process would have goals as follows: 1) To make new members feel welcomed and connected to the body of Christ; 2) To have an organized approach to helping new members become acclimated to the church, tracking the entire process; 3) To facilitate new members joining ministries in accordance with their gifts; 4) To help new members grow spiritually; 5) To provide compassionate pastoral care when new members experience crises and special life changes; and 6) To increase new member retention rate.

The ministry development team approach involves identifying leaders and laypersons with the passion and skills to collaborate with ministries to assess current ministry practices, develop new ministry practices, facilitate documentation of all ministry practices, train ministries, encourage corporate prayer, and monitor implementation plans, status reports, schedules, and new member surveys for accountability purposes.

In his book entitled *Stop the Church's Revolving Door: Building Relationships With Church Members*, Richard Wright poses the question, "Does your church have a revolving door?" Unfortunately, many of our churches do and the challenge to be addressed in this project is how to stop the door from revolving. Wright confirms that most churches do not have a ministry to establish and maintain authentic personal relationships with inactive members, visitors, or prospective members.[1] In this project, the effectiveness of a ministry team approach to resolve this problem is highlighted. In his book entitled *Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams,* Stanley E. Ott insists that the power of ministry teams lies in their unique capacity to generate genuine Christian fellowship, grow disciples, develop leaders, and mobilize people for ministry. Understanding the impact of relationship building via small groups on growing new members into disciples for Christ, this researcher is in agreement with Ott, when he states, "Where traditional church leadership organizations concentrate almost exclusively on task, policy, and program, ministry teams are designed to enhance faith development and, therefore, ministry effectiveness."[2]

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[1] Richard Wright, *Stop the Church's Revolving Door: Building Relationships With Church* Members (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2011).

From a historical perspective, the small group or ministry team approach to new member assimilation can be traced back to the practice of discipleship through class meetings as initiated by theologian John Wesley, a leader of the Methodist movement. This historical perspective is thus explored in this presentation of the life of John Wesley; Wesley's system of interlocking groups; the significance of Methodist class meetings; and the transition from society to church. The historical foundation concludes with a discussion of the correlation between class meetings and the ministry team approach to new member assimilation.

The Life of John Wesley

Relational experiences are key to the development of ministry teams and disciples as confirmed by theologian John Wesley. According to Alister E. McGrath in *Christian Theology An Introduction,* John Wesley (1703-91) founded the Methodist movement within the Church of England, which subsequently gave birth to Methodism as a denomination in its own right. Convinced that he "lacked the faith whereby alone we are saved," Wesley discovered the need for a living faith and the role of experience in the Christian life through his conversion experience at a meeting on Aldersgate Street in May 1738, in which he "felt his heart to be strangely warmed." Wesley's emphasis upon the experiential side of Christian faith, which contrasted sharply with the dullness of contemporary English Deism, led to a major revival in England.[3]

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[2] Stanley E. Ott, *Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Errdmans Publishing Company, 2004).

The Wesley Center Online notes that John Wesley was born at the Epworth Parsonage on June 17th, 1703, the fifteenth of the Rector's nineteen children. Wesley's ancestry will show that he was descended from a long line of English gentry and clergymen. Both sides of the house had enjoyed the highest education and the best breeding for many generations.[4]

This source goes on to note that Mrs. Wesley was the schoolmistress of the Parsonage. Training may be said to have begun with her children's birth. Mrs. Wesley's first care was to teach her children obedience. She knew that this was not only the way to rule well her large household, but also to secure the happiness of her boys and girls. Religious training began as early as possible. Even before they could kneel or speak, they were taught to be quiet at family prayer and to ask a blessing by signs. As soon as they could speak, they repeated the Lord's Prayer morning and evening. A prayer for their parents, some collects, Catechism, and scripture, were added as soon as they were able to learn them. No profane or rude words were ever heard in the Parsonage. The children were taught to ask quietly for what they wanted. Confession of a fault always averted punishment, so that many temptations to falsehood were removed.[5]

Research shows that Wesley entered Oxford University in June 1720, a week after his seventeenth birthday. When he went to Oxford, Wesley still said his prayers, both in public and private, and read the scriptures, with other devotional books, especially comments on the New Testament. The beginning of 1725 seems to have been marked by a great increase of spiritual desire. Wesley was not yet twenty-two. He thought of entering the church, and consulted his parents. His father wished that he should devote himself to critical learning, but Mrs. Wesley was greatly pleased by his desire to take orders. His father wrote him on January 26th, 1725, to express his pleasure that his son had such a high conception of the work of a minister, and to point out the motives that should govern his choice of such a life. "The principal spring and motive, to which all the former should be only secondary, must certainly be the glory of God and the service of His Church in the edification of our neighbor. And woe to him who, with any meaner leading view, attempts so sacred a work." He was ordained deacon in Christ Church Cathedral on Sunday, September 19th, 1725, by Dr. Potter, then Bishop of Oxford, who also admitted him to priest's orders in the same place on September 22nd, 1728. Soon after his ordination, in 1725, Wesley delivered his first sermon. After his ordination, Wesley quietly pursued his divinity studies. On March 17th, 1726, Wesley was unanimously elected Fellow of Lincoln College.[6]

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[3] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 83.

[4] "The Life of John Wesley by John Telfor, Chapter 1, Ancestry and Parentage," *The Wesley Center Online,* accessed March 7, 2014, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-life-of-john-wesley-by-john-telford/.

[5] "The Life of John Wesley by John Telfor, Chapter 2."

According to chapter 4 of *The Life of John Wesley by John Telford,* Wesley returned to Oxford on November 22, 1729. It is observed that Wesley was called to Oxford to preside at Moderations. Public disputation formed a large part in the University training of those days. The Moderator was the chairman and arbitrator at such discussions. Such was Wesley's life during the last six years he spent at Oxford. But the surpassing interest of these years is found in the rise of Methodism in the University. John Wesley came in June and spent two months with his brother, Charles Wesley. During his stay, he passed almost every evening with the little Society, which had gathered round Charles. The name of Methodists was given to the friends before John Wesley came into residence. A young gentleman of Christ Church, struck with the exact regularity of their lives and studies, said, "Here is a new sect of Methodists sprung up." The name Methodist was quaint, and not inappropriate. The members of the little Society were soon known by it throughout the University. About forty years before it found its most famous application, it was given to Dr. Williams and other Nonconformist divines to describe their views on the method of man's justification before God. Methodist was not the only name given to the Society. The Reforming Club, the Godly Club, the Holy Club, Sacramentarians, Bible Moths, Supererogation men, and Enthusiasts were all used. John Wesley was called the Curator, or Father of the Holy Club.[7]

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[6] "The Life of John Wesley by John Telfor, Chapter 4."

Wesley's System of Interlocking Groups

D. Michael Henderson in his book entitled *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*, notes that the instructional components of the Methodist system were fully assembled by 1742. Henderson explains how over the next fifty years, during the period of Methodist expansion under Wesley's personal leadership, the structure of the groups underwent only slight alterations. Wesley's physical presence in the societies made possible by his constantly revolving itinerancy, kept the structure of the system close to his original vision. Alongside the instructional system was an administrative system, which increased the complexity as the Methodist movement grew and expanded. The two systems overlapped at points, but at least during Wesley's lifetime, the instructional pattern was quite stable. Much of the effectiveness of this hierarchy of instructional groups was because each component gathering of people employed methods tailored to a specific function; then those groups were yoked together into an interlocking network. Probably the best way to distinguish between each group in the chain is to refer to each category as a specific educational mode, if we understand the term mode to mean an appropriate method of procedure.[8]

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[7] "The Life of John Wesley by John Telfor, Chapter 5."

The Society: The Cognitive Mode

Henderson gives this account of the Methodist Society—the group, which included all the Methodists in a given area or locality: The term society is nearly synonymous with the term congregation. It included all those who were official members plus any adherents who attended open functions of the fellowship. The Methodist society was the focal point of group identification. In relation to the other groups within the Methodist system, the society was the hub of all other functions; it was the umbrella group of the organization in that all other related groups came under its jurisdiction.

In the Rule of United Societies, Wesley gives his own definition of a society: Such a society is no other than a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each to work out their own salvation. The primary function of the society was cognitive instruction; it was the educational channel by which the tenets of Methodism were presented to the target population. Those who were drawn to the Methodist by curiosity or by field preaching or by the invitation of a friend were introduced to its particular teachings through society meetings.

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[8] D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1997), 83.

The methods selected for this mode were as appropriate for large group presentation as could be obtained in that day and time: lecture, preaching, public reading, hymn signing, and exhorting. In each case, the physical arrangement was an audience of fifty or more people, arranged in rows; usually listening to a speaker give a prepared talk. Little or no provision was made in this particular mode for personal response or feedback.[9]

Since the central unit of the Methodist system served essentially cognitive ends, it was inevitable that a body of concepts would soon come to be recognized as Methodist doctrine. Wesley was primarily concerned with methodology; his definition of a Methodist was "one who lives according to the method laid down in the Bible." However, even though he may not have set out to become a theological innovator, what remains today of Methodism is an organization and that body of doctrine which came to be associated with the early Methodist societies. As Marshall McLuhan has theorized, "The medium is the message." In this case, the medium is the whole arrangement of Methodist groups; the message is the selection of ideas, all current in England, at the time, which was germane to that medium. The relevance to Wesley's instructional methodology is that his belief system formed a selection grid or filter by which he either selected, rejected, or modified educational tools as he became aware of them. Some of his key themes are:[10]

1. The perfectibility of humanity. In contrast to the pessimism about human nature, which was characteristic of the Reformed or Calvinistic churchmen, Wesley was optimistic that human nature could be radically altered for the better. This is not to be confused with the humanism of the Enlightenment-concepts, which advocated that human beings could raise themselves by their

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[9] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 84.

[10] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 85.

own efforts but rather the perfection of humanity's intentions and behavior by God's grace.

2. The freedom of the human will. Against the prevalent tide of theological determinism found in both Anglican and Dissenting churches, Wesley rejected the fatalistic idea that all human actions are predetermined. He placed the responsibility for human behavior squarely on the individual, whom he believed to be capable of making moral choices. The proper name for this belief is Arminianism, a system of thought with which Wesley identified fairly completely.

3. True religion manifests itself in human relationships. In contrast to the mystics, who emphasized inner contemplation as the way to spiritual growth, Wesley promoted social interaction as the way to "holiness." His preface to the 1739 hymnbook is a classic refutation of mysticism and solitary religion, placing the full thrust of personal growth on group participation.[11]

Class Meeting: The Behavioral Mode

Henderson further notes that the class meeting was the most influential instructional unit in Methodism and probably Wesley's greatest contribution to the technology of group experience: Although amazingly simple, it has elicited the praise of educators and religious leaders as a profoundly effective educational tool. Henry Ward Beecher said, "The greatest thing John Wesley ever gave to the world is the Methodist class-meeting." Dwight L. Moody, nineteenth-century revivalist, offered this commendation: "The Methodist class meetings are the best instructions for training converts the world ever saw." To the class meeting must go much of the credit which many historians have attributed to Methodism for the radical transformation of England's working masses. It was a triumph, not of any human personality but of an ingenious set of instruments designed for behavioral change.[12]

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[11] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 86.

[12] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 93.

According to Henderson, the particular behaviors, which the class meeting was aimed at producing, were listed in the Rules, which provided a sort of constitution for the class meeting. There were three categories of behaviors specified: 1) prohibitions, or things not to do; 2) exhortations, or positive behaviors; and 3) helpful practice to be maintained, which were known as the means of grace. The class meeting provided a forum, available to no one else in Hanoverian England, for free expression in an accepting environment by people from widely different social backgrounds. Looking back from the perspective of the twentieth century, the Wesleyan class meeting seems to have been the first and probably the most powerful leveling agent which helped to break up the rigid British caste system and provide upward social mobility. Leslie Church, in his analysis of the class roles of early societies, points out how completely the rich and poor, educated and illiterate, gentlemen and laborers, were united in these classes: There is a complete absence of class distinctions in these lists. They represent a family whose spiritual kinship was recognized by each member. They came together in an intimacy that could not recognize social barriers, and the names of people who met on perfect equality each appear side by side, whether they are described as gentlemen or laborers, yeomen or apothecaries. Those who could enter a Methodist society must first abandon all idea of caste.[13]

The format of the class meeting began with a short hymn (begun promptly at the stated hour) followed by the leader stating the condition of his or her spiritual life. The leader would then give a short testimonial concerning the previous week's experience, thanking God for progress, and honestly sharing any failures, sins, temptations, grief, or inner battles. In this sense, the leader was modeling the role for the others to follow. By following this example, the tenor of the session was controlled and directed. Many of the participants were downtrodden peasants who had been unaccustomed to any expression of their inner feelings and personal experience, so the pace established by the leader was a crucial step in the process.[14]

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[13] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 97-98.

The subject matter of a class meeting was personal experience, not doctrinal ideology, or biblical information. The only place where conceptual data impinged upon the class process was the struggle, which individuals underwent in internalizing or applying or incorporating some biblical ideal into their lives. The collective goal toward which the classes pulled was the attainment of personal holiness, or what Wesley called perfect love, or the character of Christ. As new converts took up these goals for themselves, they were nurtured in the encouraging context of an affirming group, all of whom were in various stages of the same quest.[15]

Not only did class leaders carry the pastoral oversight for their tiny flocks, but it was also made clear throughout Methodism that this position was the first rung of the ladder of leadership. Any future or higher aspiration for leadership roles depended entirely upon faithfulness as a class leader. In this arrangement lies one of the strengths of the Methodist concept of leadership: it took no training or talent to be a class leader; anyone could do it. Being a class leader was in no way related to wealth, or education, or professional expertise, or social standing; it was not an elite position. But, it did demand faithfulness, honesty, and concern for people. Anyone who demonstrated these qualities as a class leader could rise to higher levels of leadership, but without them it was impossible to be a Methodist leader, no matter how educated or wealthy or talented. The one requirement of the Methodist economy was in large part responsible for the practicality and down-to-earth usefulness of Methodism for more than a century. Another role of the class leader was to establish a climate of acceptance and commitment. As each member reported his or her progress, there was to be an atmosphere of trust and understanding generated by the others and stoked by the leader.[16]

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[14] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 99.

[15] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 100.

Henderson noted how the members of a class often stayed together for years, cultivating the most intimate and helpful of friendships. In this circle of companionship, it was difficult to be evasive or hypocritical. Deep levels of trust and affection were engendered: an optimum environment for the cultivation of personal character. Hearty thanksgiving and praise to God accompanied and affirmed every step of progress; loving and understanding sympathy and encouragement bolstered personal failures. These Methodists were people who believed that the real joy of human life was spiritual fellowship and morale growth in an effort to place the experimental emphasis of the class meeting in historical perspective. It could be generalized that the continental reformers of the sixth century had emphasized two great dimensions of church life: the Bible and the sacraments. The next generation of Protestants (17th century) added the dimension of church order and ecclesiastical polity. In the eighteenth century, through the pietists, the Moravians, and the Methodists, the dimension of Christian community comes into the developmental stream. The biblical word, which describes this emphasis is koinonia and carries the connotation of intimate fellowship and loving concern. The koinonia concept was a germinal idea behind the small group experiments, which Wesley (and others) undertook in an attempt to experience the inwardness of the true church, the fellowship of genuine believers.[17]

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[16] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 101.

Wesley's innovation in-group processes mark a new turn in religious history, not so much because he introduced new content, but because his methods forced a new orientation in religious knowledge. The longer Wesley lived, the more he justified his group methods in biblical rather than expedient terms. If he saw the class meeting helpful in the early days, it became essential by the time Methodism was expanding into all corners of the nation. His major concern about any method was whether it worked and produced the desired results—which for the class meeting meant behavioral transformation. One problem, which had to be dealt with in the early days of the class meeting, was what to do with visitors. Obviously, a stranger or an uncommitted outsider could squelch the spirit of confidentiality and acceptance so essential to the class meeting objectives. It was decided by the Methodist leaders that visitors could attend twice before deciding to join a class. If they choose not to apply for membership, they were from then on excluded from any sessions of the class. Also, in order to protect the fragile environment of the class, every other session was closed to all outsiders. The society and the class meeting were linked together in three very significant ways. First of all, the class was a subdivision of the society and its leaders were appointed by the leaders of the society and were accountable to them. Secondly, the functions of teaching and behavioral transformation were tied together by the design of the two groups—the class meeting incorporated the lives of its members what had been taught in the society meetings. Thirdly, active participation in the class meeting was the condition for membership in the society. No one could attend the closed meeting of the society without regular class meeting attendance.[18]

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[17] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 102-104.

At the center of the transforming methodology of Methodism was the class meeting. It provided the following key elements toward the success of the entire system:

1) It furnished the environment in which cognitive concepts could be experimentally or experientially tested.
2) It served as a purging or pruning instrument to keep "deadwood" out of the society.
3) It was a training ground for leaders.
4) It was a point of entry capable of incorporating large numbers of new people quickly.
5) It financed the movement through penny collections.
6) Its accounting system provided a constant and immediate record of the strength and size of the movement.
7) It forced 100 percent mobilization and participation of the membership.
8) It gave every member a voice in the affairs of Methodism.
9) It allowed people to practice speaking their inner feelings.
10) It provided the milieu for resolving conflicts within the society by immediate face-to-face confrontation.[19]

Band: The Affective Mode

According to Henderson, in the Methodist system, the society meetings aimed at cognitive instruction, the class meeting provided an environment for behavioral change, and a third mode—the band-facilitated affective redirection. Unlike the class meeting, it was a homogeneous grouping, not only by sex, but also by age and marital status; the married met together, the single women, and so on. The bands were voluntary cells of people who professed a clear Christian commitment and who desired to grow in love, holiness, and purity of intention. The group environment was one of ruthless honesty and frank openness, in which its members sought to improve their attitudes, emotions, feelings, intentions, and affections. It could be said metaphorically that society aimed for the head, the class meeting for the hands, and the band for the heart.[20]

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[18] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 104-107.

[19] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 110.

Select Society: The Training Mode

In the early years of Methodism, the uppermost group in the instructional hierarchy was the select society. As its name suggests, it was a select company of men and women whom Wesley had hand picked from among the most faithful Methodists. The purpose of this group was to model or exemplify what Methodism was all about; especially the perfecting of the human spirit, and it was to provide a training experience in the doctrines and methods of Methodism. The select society was an elite corps of those enthusiasts who had worked their way up through the ranks of class meeting, society, and hand and were considered by both their peers and the leaders to be the standard-bearers of the movement.[21]

Penitent Bands: The Rehabilitative Mode

One final group in Wesley's system, according to Henderson, was specially designed for those who lacked the will power or personal discipline to the behavioral demands of the class meeting but still had a desire to overcome their personal problems. Since the target population of the Methodist system was what many considered the dregs of England society, the instructional hierarchy of groups needed some alternative route for those with serious social dysfunctions. For these, Wesley designed an entirely different kind of group: the penitent band. The primary goal of the penitent band was to restore its members to the mainstream of the society and its regular channels of growth.[22]

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[20] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 112.

[21] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 121.

The Significance of Methodist Class Meetings

David Lowes Watson in his book entitled *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, pointed out the significance of Methodist class meetings in terms of interpersonal dynamics and gives this account: Understandings of interpersonal dynamics have likewise made clear that many of the characteristics of the class meeting are common to all small groups. For one thing, they provided a sense of security, thereby meeting some basic social and personal needs of their members. Sociological studies have shown that all people have three needs in common: the need for inclusion—the degree of commitment, belongingness, and participation an individual requires in human interaction; the need for control—the degree of influence and power an individual requires; and the need for affection—the degree of closeness and intimacy an individual requires. And in meeting these needs, the early Methodist classes could not avoid a further dimension of group dynamics—that any genuine human interaction inevitably involves feeling and emotion, the basic raw data of interpersonal relationships.[23]

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[22] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 125-126.

[23] David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1987), 129.

According to Watson, the analysis of emotional expression as it occurs in small groups has been an important development in interpersonal dynamics. Not only has this led to more detailed correlation between feeling and human needs, it has also provided a new awareness of personal change as it takes place in groups, where emotional expression is caught up in a highly distinctive dynamic through a process of feedback and interaction. Moreover, as the work of Carl Rogers has demonstrated, self-expression can be the means of meeting the need for personal growth and of achieving emotional maturity. The class meeting quickly acquired such a dynamic. As members were asked by the leader each week to articulate their religious experiences and feeling, they grew in self-assurance and self-perception.[24]

Social Needs and Eighteenth Century English Society

Watson goes on to share that these insights raise the sociological question of the extent to which Methodism was supplying some basic needs for its members in response to a society, which was suffering from radical change and depersonalization. Watson notes that Rogers, for example, is convinced that, in a broader social context, personal growth achieved through a process of self-expression is a concept of a new kind of life, particularly suited to a society where people must develop skills to exchange deep feelings through relationships of a comparatively short duration. "At the present time (the encounter group experience) is the best instrument I know for healing the loneliness that prevails in so many human beings. It holds forth a real hope that isolation need not be the keynote of our individual lives." By the same token, Kurt Back has observed, "The search for groups in which intense and emotional experience can be enjoyed is a sign of disturbance in many societies, occurring at times of deep social unrest and especially during the rise of new religions."[25]

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[24] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 129.

Methodist Membership and Social Identity

In this context of social deprivation, according to Watson, Methodism brought to many a recognition and identity. "For the crushed and despised classes to he told over and over again that God loved them, that Christ died for them, that there was forgiveness of sins (and reconciliation) through the wondrous cross, sounded strange in their ears and brought a marvel to their hearts." There can be little doubt that those who joined the Methodist societies found in their weekly class meetings, the human relationships, which provided the means of achieving their identity. But in view of the prominence, which group dynamics continue to receive in the life and work of the contemporary church, it is important to note that the class meeting must be considered primarily in terms of what it did for its members rather than for eighteenth century English society as a whole.[26]

Behavioral Change

By the same token, Watson notes that the format of the class meeting was not intentionally conducive to an intensive group experience. Rather than fostering interpersonal relationships, which was quite specifically the dynamic of the bands and select societies, the class meeting was at once more pragmatic and more task-oriented. According to Watson, it was first and foremost what Kurt Lewin has defined as an instrument of planned behavioral change, a context or field in which a process of change through interpersonal relationships can be effected and sustained. Lewin, whose work in the mid-twentieth century pioneered the study of group dynamics, described this process of behavioral changes in three stages: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. While the class meeting provided the potential for all three, it seems to have been primarily a means of refreshing—the integration of a new way of life following the change brought about by the commitment of the members to an accountable discipleship.[27]

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[25] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 130.

[26] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 131-132.

Watson specifies, not that the unfreezing and changing which took place should be discounted; nor yet the depth of interpersonal relationships which was engendered by the regular mutual catechesis, on the contrary, time and again early Methodist biography reveals that the fellowship of the class meeting was a major influence in bringing people to the point of Christian commitment as well as confirming them in it afterwards. Conversions were usually a climatic point in a process of gradual awakening to the truth of the gospel, in which attendance at class meetings played a pivotal role. But it must be reiterated that the context, or field, of this unfreezing and changing was the accountability required of all members for works of obedience and for using the means of grace. Wesley constantly affirmed the efficiency of these practices for all members, whatever their level of commitment to the faith. Accountability was preparation for commitment no less than its out-working in discipleship. The means of grace were converting as well as sustaining ordinances.[28]

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[27] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting,* 132.

[28] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting,* 132.

Group Cohesiveness and Cognitive Dissonance

Watson further notes that the theories of the group interaction have further made clear, that the influence of the class meeting on members was directly related to their cohesiveness as disciplined groups. Members of highly cohesive groups will tend to influence each other more, thereby making a greater effort to reach agreement; and there were many aspects of the class meeting, which engendered precisely the conditions, which have been found to induce such cohesiveness. There was the class ticket, for example, which restricted membership to those who affirmed the same values and pursued the same goals; there was obligatory weekly attendance; and perhaps most of all, there was regular instructions in the purpose and function of the group provided by the catechetical questioning of the leader. In addition to all of which, it seems clear that the classes functioned according to the theory and cognitive dissonance: that "the simultaneous existence of cognitions which in one way or another did not fit together (dissonance) leads to effort on the part of the person to somehow make them fit better (dissonance reduction)." There could have been no more direct instance of this than the searching catechism of the weekly meeting.[29]

Communication

A final insight that Watson gives into the function of the class meeting is the place, which it occupied in early Methodist polity as a means of communication among Wesley, his preachers, and the members of societies. Modern studies in communication theory illustrate that the most effective pattern proves to be that which communicates information initially one-to-one through individuals, who then disseminate it to groups of people. As we have noticed, there was just such a pattern of authority from Wesley to his preachers and leaders and thence to the classes. This at once facilitated the thoroughness of Wesley's episkope' and made the class meeting an extremely effective means of instruction as well as nurture.[30]

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[29] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 133.

Purpose of the Class Meeting

To be aware of these group dynamics, however, is only to make clearer the distinctively Christian characteristic of early Methodist polity, according to Watson. Social and psychological observations help us to understand how the class meeting functioned, and to some extent why it functioned. What they do not give us is its purpose in relation to the ongoing task of Christian discipleship. Whenever Christians meet together in the name of Christ to search out God's will for their lives, they remain, of course, human beings. As such, meeting in a social context, they will not only experience group dynamics, but something will happen. The Spirit of God will be present, working in and through the dynamics, to empower those Christians in service for the coming New Age of Jesus Christ.[31]

In other words, Watson says, the church, as ecclesia cannot be viewed merely as social structure; nor yet can the ecclesia be viewed solely as communitas. Only when church finds its distinctive identity in the world is the church properly so called. And this means that the significance of the early Methodist class meeting must be determined by its role as well as its origins in the Christian tradition, viewed against the panorama of human history.[32]

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[30] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting,* 133.

[31] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting,* 134.

From Society to Church

Research shows that in nineteenth century British Methodism, it made the transition from society to church highly problematic and divisive; and in American Methodism, the steps taken in 1784 proved to be quite indecisive in terms of an ecclesial identity. There remains an ill-defined feeling in the various branches of the denomination that those who call themselves Methodists should be as disciplined and as committed, as were the members of the early societies. To aspire to this, while at the same time attempting to be an inclusive church in which there are many levels of commitment, is bound to occasion a high degree of vocational discomfort which the mainstream of Methodism has eased by assuming the more relaxed role of social institution—though not without serious challenge from the separatist Methodist churches, whose social stance, especially in the nineteenth century, has often stood in sharp contrast.[33]

Watson point out that not only was the progression from society to church contrary to Wesley's reforming intentions: it proved to be debilitating for the class meeting. In an important study, Watson notes that Henry Rack has tracked its decline in England primarily with respect to the ambivalent question of church membership. The weekly class became increasingly difficult to sustain in the nineteenth century, argues Rack, because of a lack of common religious experience, which coupled with the endemic problem of indifferent or incompetent class leadership, meant that "it was already liable to suffer from another problem and perhaps less official means of grace."

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[32] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting,* 134.

[33] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting,* 136.

As Wesleyan Methodism became more socially acceptable, preference was increasingly expressed for a "less personalized and exacting form of religious exercise." Given the lack of any clear Methodist doctrine of the church, the class meeting became a central means of fellowship rather than the basis of church membership, and the Wesleyan standard of personal holiness became more broadly social. This led to a bitter conflict in the latter half of the century, culminating in the findings of a Conference committee in 1889, which recommended retaining the class as the traditional basis of class membership, but not to insist that failure to attend justified loss of membership.

The peculiar character of Methodism was thus changed "from the condition of a society with some marks of a holiness sect to the more conventional and less demanding character of a church."[34]

Watson notes the contrasting view of William W. Dean is that the decline of the class meeting was due to a change in its basic functions. It is important, he argues, to distinguish between what Wesley wrote about the class meeting and what actually happened in them; and in Wesley's day, they were primarily a means of "evangelism and conversation—the recruitment and assimilation of new members." The first half of the nineteenth century saw the loss of both of these functions, however, in part due to changes identified by Rack, but also because of the acceptance by British society, albeit superficially, of evangelical values. References to class meetings in early Methodist autobiography declined quite abruptly during the 1830s, and the role they had hitherto served as a door into the societies was taken over by the prayer meeting—especially the after-preaching prayer meeting at the communion rail or in the vestry. Indeed, spiritual vitality in general became more frequently related to prayer meeting than to classes. They were less structured and more spontaneous gatherings, and were readily adaptable to the institutional activities of the chapel than the interpersonal spirituality of the class meeting.[35]

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[34] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting,* 136-137.

Conclusion

The correlation between class meetings and the ministry team approach to new member assimilation can be summed up in the words of John Alfred Faulkner in his book entitled *The Methodists* as he describes the class meeting as a place where Christians speak to each other of the things of God and trained multitudes for effective service.[36]

Fortunately for new members, many churches are now being trained in this historical concept of small group discipleship as evidenced in the Game Plan Training Camp, which is offered by The Wesleyan Church headquartered in Fisher, Indiana. Their mission statement reflects the essence of the Methodist movement: The Wesleyan Church is noted as a Spirit-led, praying movement called to evangelize and make disciples of all people by equipping believers, developing leaders, multiplying churches, and transforming communities.[37] This online header introduces this training camp:

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[35] Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting,* 137.

[36] John Alfred Faulkner, *The Methodists: The Meaning of Methodism* (New York, NY: The Methodist Book Concern, 1925), 35.

[37] "Church Multiplication and Discipleship," *The Wesleyan Church*, accessed April 9, 2014, www.wesleyan.org.

> John Wesley's timeless challenge still inspires healthy ministry teams—"You have nothing to do but save souls! Therefore, spend and be spent in this work. Go always not only to those who desire you, but to those that need you most."[38]

The relational and missional approach to developing disciples and assimilating new members as the Camp is noted as a combination of practical information and personalized coaching designed to equip people to break through the ministry or personal lids that hold them back. The target audience is noted as Church planters and their teams; courageous pastors and leaders who want to refocus their churches to multiply disciples; coaches who want to learn to equip church planters and leaders to be more missionally effective; and district leaders who want to equip leaders to be more missional, intentional and accountable.[39]

As this project serves as a model to use a ministry development team approach to effectively assimilate new members into the life of the church as illustrated in the class meeting, this researcher notes the significance of evaluating the effectiveness of this project. John Wesley provided the best evaluation of the class meeting in an article he wrote for the Arminian Magazine:[40]

> The particular design of the classes is, to know who continue as members of the Society; to inspect their outward walking; to inquire into their inward state; to learn what are their trials; and how they fall by or conquer them; to instruct the ignorant in the principles of religion; if need be, to repeat, to explain, or enforce, what has been said in public preaching.
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> To stir them up to believe, love, obey; and to check the first spark of offense or discord. To inquire whether they now believe; now enjoy the life of God. Whether they grow therein, or decay; if they decay what is the cause; and what is the cure. Whether they aim at being wholly devoted to God; or would keep something back. Whether they take up their cross daily; resist the bent of nature; oppose self-love in all its hidden forms, and discover it, through all its disguises.

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[38] "Church Multiplication and Discipleship."

[39] "Church Multiplication and Discipleship."

[40] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 110.

Whether they humble themselves in everything. Are willing to be blamed and despised for well-doing. Account it the greatest honor, that Christ appoints them to walk with himself, in the paths that are His own. To closely examine whether they are willing to drink of His cup, and to be baptized with His baptism.

How they conquer self-will, in its spiritual forms; see through all its disguises of themselves; consciousness of their own vileness and nothingness. How they improve their talents. What zeal they have for doing good, in all they do, or suffer, or to receive from God. Whether they live above it; making Christ their all, and offering up to God nothing for acceptance, but his life and death.

Whether they have a clear, full, abiding conviction, that without inward, complete, universal holiness, no man shall see the Lord. That Christ was sacrificed for us; that we might be a whole burnt sacrifice to God; and that having received The Lord Jesus Christ, will profit us nothing, unless we steadily walk in him. I earnestly exalt all leaders of classes and bands, to seriously consider the preceding observations, and put them in execution with all the understanding and the courage that God has given them.

J. Wesley

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

For the purposes of this section of research, the doctrine of the church and the doctrine of the trinity will be our focus. These two doctrines point to the theological significance of developing relationships in ministry teams and new member assimilation. These relationships have the potential of connecting new members to the life of the church, allowing them to make meaningful contributions in ministry, thus, remaining in the church to work out their soul salvation.

In his article entitled *Apostolic Theology*, author Jonathan Black points out that the New Testament uses the word koinonia rather than relationship when referring to fellowship or communion in the church. Black further notes that theologians care about relationships in the church and he gives the following account of how theologians want to 1) grow relationships; 2) protect relationships; and 3) fix relationships:[1]

> 1) Grow relationships - The primary relationship theologians want to see grow and help grow through their precision is the relationship between people and God. Not just other people and God, for theologians too should always be growing in their knowledge of and love for God. The more we know about God, about what He is like and what He has done, the greater our love for Him will be and the stronger our relationship with Him will grow. And what from afar may seem like theological nitpicking may end up having a huge impact on our understanding of our gracious God. But it's not only our relationship with God Himself that grows as we grow in our knowledge of and love for Him. Our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ grow too as we learn together and grow in our common understanding of the mercy of God.

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[1] Jonathan Black, "Apostolic Theology," accessed April 9, 2014, http://apostolic-theology.com/.

2) Protect Relationships - Probably the vast majority of precise theological distinctions have been articulated in order to protect relationships. However, it's not relationships with the teacher of novelties (or heresies) that the theologians were seeking to protect, but the relationships of the ordinary men and women of God. The theologians wanted to protect the flock from being 'tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine' (Eph 4:14). They wanted to protect their relationships with God and with each other. The relationships of the whole church tended to get prioritized over the feelings of the false teachers.

3) Fix Relationships - Good theologians, however, usually don't lack concern even for those who are in the wrong. Their goal isn't to prove how right and knowledgeable they are, but to call those who have wondered from the true faith to repentance and restoration to fellowship. The goal is that the relationships of those who are teaching falsely should be restored, both their relationship with God and their relationship with God's people. But that can only come through confession and repentance.

The Doctrine Of The Church

In their book entitled *Introduction to Theology*, authors Thomas and Wondra insist that the disciplines of practical theology deal with the practice of the church and its members.[2] The basis of these disciplines is the doctrine of the church, that is, the interpretation of the nature and purpose of the church, what the church and its members are called to be and to do.[3] According to Thomas and Wondra, Paul Minear claims to have isolated almost one hundred different images for the church in the New Testament and can be summarized under four headings:[4] The congregational of the faithful, the body of Christ, the fellowship of the spirit, and the community of hope.

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[2] Owen C. Thomas, Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 257.

[3] Owen C. Thomas, "Some Issues in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 6 (1969): 346-56.

[4] Thomas, "Some Issues in Theological Education," 258.

The main point the Apostle Paul makes about the church is his use of the body metaphor. First that Christians are united with Christ and with each other by the Spirit of Christ or the Holy Spirit, and that the church is the body of Christ because it is the community in which the Spirit of Christ dwells. Second, Christians receive various gifts of the Spirit for different functions in the community. These are given for the benefit and well-being of the whole community. So the church is the body of Christ in that the Spirit of Christ gives gifts to the members, so that they may function in a way analogous to that in which parts of the human body function in relation to the whole body (I Cor 12). Third, and following from this, the life and well-being of the community depends on the service and function of all members, and it suffers if any of the members is separated from the community, on the analogy of a human body. Thus the church is the body of Christ in that each of the functions made possible by the Spirit of Christ is necessary for its well-being.

The doctrine of the church has been termed by scholars as ecclesiology, derived from ekklesia, which is the Greek word for church. Alister E. McGrath in his book entitled *Christian Theology, An Introduction,* points out that while ecclesiology was not a major issue in the early church, it was Isidore of Pelusium who defined the church as "the assembly of saints joined together by correct faith and an excellent manner of life."[5] McGrath went on to note that the following elements can be discerned as having achieved a wide consensus at the time:

1. The church is a spiritual society, which replaces Israel as the people of God in the world.

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[5] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 477.

2. All Christians are made one in Christ, despite their different origins and backgrounds.

3. The church is the repository of true Christian teaching.

4. The church gathers the faithful throughout the world together, in order to enable them to grow in faith and holiness.

In *Assimilating New Members*, Lyle E. Schaller, a recognized church planner, presents this theological stance on church self-examination of new member assimilation efforts while showing how to evaluate the local church recruitment and assimilation processes, recognize and avoid counterproductive behavior patterns, and make people more effective by involving more members in the ongoing life of the church.[6]

> In perhaps 10 to 20 percent of all Protestant congregations, the dominant organizing principle is based on the position of that congregation on the theological spectrum. "This is the most conservative church in town" or "This is the only liberal church in town" are the words often used to articulate this original principle in organizing a congregation into a cohesive and unified group. There is unity in conformity. (It is worth noting that the first Christian Church council, Acts 15:1-19, was called to decide whether the unity of the church would be in conformity or in Jesus Christ.) This basic organizational principle has limited value except in those congregations which perceive themselves as being at one end or the other of the theological spectrum and is far more significant as a cohesive force in the extremely conservative congregations than for those at the liberal end of that spectrum. Rarely is it a significant factor for the congregations in the middle 80 percent of the spectrum. Some observers contend this is a very basic principle for church growth. They contend that the theologically pluralistic congregation is unlikely to be a growing congregation.

This writer sees The Sanctuary as a social unit and concurs with the following statement made by Wolfhart Pannenberg in his book entitled *Systematic Theology*:

> On the basis of the liturgical center of its life, then the church even as a social unit is ordained to be a sign of God's will to save humanity, a sign of reconciliation

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[6] Lyle E. Schaller, *Creative Leadership Series, Assimilating New Members* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1978), 31.

> with God and of the resultant renewal in intra-human relations, a sign of the future fellowship of humanity in the kingdom of God.[7]

At The Sanctuary it became necessary to realize and teach that in relationships within ministry teams and with new members, no one is perfect but God as "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," which reflects Augustine of Hippo's below premise of the *sinfulness of Christians.*

> The church is not meant to be a society of saints, but a mixed body *(corpus permixtum)* of saints and sinners. Augustine finds this image in two biblical parables: the parables of the net, which catches many fishes, and the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt 13: 24-31). The parable tells of a farmer who sowed seed, and discovered that the resulting crop included both wheat and tares— grain and weeds. What could be done about it? To attempt to separate the wheat and tares—grain and weeds while both were still growing would be to court disaster, probably involving damaging the wheat while trying to get rid of the weeds. But at the harvest, all the plants—wheat and tares— are cut down and sorted out without any danger of damaging the wheat. The separation of the good and the evil thus takes place at the end of time, not in history. For Augustine, this parable refers to the church in the world. It must expect to find itself including both saints and sinners. To attempt a separation in this world is premature and improper. That separation will take place in God's own time, at the end of history. No human can make that judgment or separation in God's place. So in what sense is the church holy? For Augustine, the holiness in question is not that of its members, but of Christ. The church cannot be a congregation of saints in this world, in that its members are contaminated with original sin. However, the church is sanctified and made holy by Christ—a holiness, which will be perfected and finally realized at the last judgment.[8]

While speaking about the doctrine of the church, authors Webster, Tanner and Torrence note how theologians support the faith, visibility, and necessity of the church. Specifically, quoting Thomas Aquinas: "Faith is directed to the Holy Ghost, Who sanctifies the Church; so that the sense is: "I believe in the Holy Ghost sanctifying the Church." According to these authors, this lays the theological foundation of the church and keeps in perspective the relationship between theological faith created and engendered by the divine Word and the community of faith, the church, itself the mother of faith.[9] The church as a community of faith, united in communion as the body of Christ is furthered explained by these authors as follows:

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[7] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 432.

[8] McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 480.

> J. M. R. Tillard, one of the most significant Catholic contributors to a 'communion ecclesiology', made the claim in the spirit of *ressourcement* that this ecclesiology, 'sacramental and mystical before coming juridical and sociological', was the one held by the undivided church of antiquity, with Augustine, John Chrysostom, and Cyril as fifth-century witnesses respectively from the West, Antioch, and Alexandria (Tillard 2001: 33). Communion bespeaks the relationship between Christ and the church, a '*circumincessio* ("a true mutual inhabiting") between [Christ's] sacramental body and ecclesial body', which is not without a strong pneumatological character (Tillard 2001: 46). Augustine in this regard may be taken as typical.
>
> Believers know that this is the body of Christ if they do not neglect to be the body of Christ. That they become the body of Christ if they want to live by the Spirit of Christ. No one lives by the Spirit of Christ except the body of Christ. (Augustine, Homilies on the Gospel of John 26. 13-14, in Tillard 2001: 46).[10]

Focus on fellowship through connection while establishing meaningful relationships with new members have proven effective in establishing relationships at The Sanctuary. This concept is supported in the writings of McGrath as he spoke of the church as communion:

> In 1943 the German Catholic writer Ludwig von Hertling published a study entitled *Communio: Church and Papacy in Early Christianity,* which dealt with the importance of the theme of Communion (often referred to by the Greek term koinonia) for a proper understanding of the nature of the church. This work had a deep influence on the Council's reflections, and its distinctive themes can be found in the final statement on the church. On account of the overtones, which the term "communion" now possesses, it is perhaps useful to employ the older English word fellowship to bring out the point at issue. The basic biblical theme, which is expressed by this term is that of sharing in a common life, whether this life is thought of as the life of the Trinity itself, or a common life of believers within the church. The term possesses both vertical and horizontal aspects, the

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[9] John Webster, Katheryn Tanner, Iain Torrence, *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 252.

[10] Webster, Tanner, Torrence, *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, 253.

> former referring to the relation between the believer and God, and the latter to the relationship between individual believers. The regulatory enforcement of fellowship was now seen to be one aspect of the more fundamental idea of the fellowship between the believer and God, established through the death and resurrection of Christ, and lived out in the life of the church.[11]

The theological basis of relationship building as a tool for new member assimilation is further supported by Thomas and Wondra as they conclude that there are 'new kinds of unity and disunity emerging in the church and that the task of the church today is to heal the old divisions while not allowing the new tensions to divide the church further.'[12] These authors address debates about the doctrine of the church. One debate is about whether the church is essentially an event between God and humanity or a body continuous in history, whether its reality is essentially vertical or horizontal, and whether the church is essentially an eschatological community or a sacramental institution. According to Thomas and Wondra, the first is the traditional Protestant emphasis and the second the traditional Catholic emphasis, which they explain as, follows:[13]

> In the vertical emphasis, the church is renewed if not created anew in every moment of preaching and hearing of the word, and the stress is on the relation of God and humanity in the present. In the horizontal emphasis, the church's life is based on the given continuities of sacrament and church order, reaching back to the foundation of the church by Christ and the apostles, and the stress is on the working of God in and through these continuities. For Bultmann, the church exists only in the event of preaching, hearing, and obedience to the kerygma. He states that the church is constituted by the kerygma and is real only as an event. Brunner stresses another aspect of this approach: "The New Testament *Ecclesia*, the fellowship of Jesus Christ, is a pure communion of persons and has nothing of the character of an institution about it. This statement is based on Brunner's personal-existentialist distinction of the I-Thou realm and the It realm, the church belonging to the former and institutions to the latter. The most Brunner is able to say on the other side is that, although the church is not an institution or organization, it has institutions and needs organizations….The event-character of the church can be understood as manifest in moments of special individual and

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[11] Webster, Tanner, and Torrence, *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, 493.

[12] Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 273.

[13] Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 266-267.

> communal awareness of the presence of God, which renew and reform the life of the individual and the community. However, the individual and communal Christian life must continue and be maintained between these moments of special awareness, and this requires structures of institutional order and continuity.

Thomas and Wondra also address the debate about whether the church is a visible or an invisible reality. They clarify that this debate is not over whether faith, hope, and love are visible in the life of the church, or whether the church is properly an article of faith, as in the creeds. According to these authors, all would agree that faith, hope, and love are not simply visible and that the church is an article of faith in that this visible group of people is called by God to be an instrument in fulfillment of the divine purposes for the creation. Thomas and Wondra have this to say about this relational matter:[14]

> The subject of the debate over the terms visible and invisible is whether the church of which the New Testament authors and the creeds speak is to be identified with a certain group of people, distinguished by such outward signs as baptism, affirmation of a creed, and participation in the Eucharist, or with a group who are or will be saved and who are not known by any outward sign, but are known only to God. We have noted that it was Augustine who formulated this distinction clearly for the Western tradition. He held that the true church consisted of the elect, some of who were inside and some of whom were outside the visible church. Luther and Calvin followed Augustine in this distinction. We have noted that Article XIX departs from the other Reformation confessions in defining the church as visible only…The visibility of the church means that it can be the object of study by the human sciences, including social psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, and history. The church is a human community that can be compared to other human communities. It has a variety of structures and procedures. It is a political community involving decision-making processes. It is also a community of language, interpretation, memory, and understanding like many other human communities. James M. Gustafson states: "Precisely the natural community, political community, the community of language, interpretation and understanding, the community of belief and action, is the Church, God's people." He claims that the approach to the church through social theory has been ignored, and that when the church has been interpreted only in doctrinal terms, much oversimplification, confusion, and distortion has resulted. He calls this "doctrinal reductionism." Some contemporary theologies of the church do use the human sciences as both analytic and programmatic tools…The human sciences deal with the church insofar as it is a visible, observable, and occasionally measurable reality. Theology deals with the same

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[14] Thomas, and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 268-269.

> church in relation to God. Thus Moltmann states that, as in Christology, there is an ecclesiology from above, beginning with the church as an object of faith, as in the creeds, and an ecclesiology from below, beginning with the observable institution.

The Doctrine of the Trinity

Theologian Jason Vickers in his book entitled *Minding the Good Ground* notes,

> Despite the visible disunity of the church throughout the world, we can rightly attribute unity to the church insofar as it is the same Holy Spirit who enables the church in all of its manifestations to bear witness to Jesus Christ and to worship the Holy Trinity in truth and love. Even more profoundly, we can attribute unity to the church insofar as the Holy Spirit who animates the churches throughout the world is ever drawing them into the fullness of the unity of the Holy Trinity, whom the church worships in joyous thanksgiving and praise."[15]

According to McGrath, the theologian who may be argued to be responsible for the development of the distinctive Trinitarian terminology is Tertullian. McGrath further points out that the doctrine of the Trinity can be regarded as the outcome of a process of sustained and critical reflection on the pattern of divine activity revealed in scripture, and continued in Christian experience. This doctrine is summarized as "three persons, one God" referring to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. McGrath expounded on Trinitarian models to allow this understanding of the Godhead to be visualized:

> Eastern theology tended to emphasize the distinct individuality of the three persons or *hypostases*, and to safeguard their unity by stressing the fact that both the Son and the Spirit derived from the Father. The relation between the persons or *hypostases* is ontological, grounded in what those persons are. Thus the relation of the Son to the Father is defined in terms of being begotten and sonship. The western approach, however, was more marked by its tendency to begin from the unity of God, especially in the work of revelation and redemption, and to interpret the relation of the three persons in terms of their mutual fellowship.[16]

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[15] Jason E. Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 37.

[16] McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 324.

McGrath presented the following theological reflections from various theologians on the doctrine of the Trinity:[17] Irenaeus—The whole process of salvation, from its beginning to its end, bore witness to the action of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For Irenaeus, the economy of salvation meant the way in which God has ordered the salvation of humanity in history.

Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Gregory of Nyssa—Perichoresis refers to the manner in which the three persons of the Trinity relate to one another. According to Perichoresis, this process allows the individuality of the persons to be maintained, while insisting that each person shares in the life of the other two. An image often used to express this idea is that of a community of being, in which each person, while maintaining its distinctive identity, penetrates the others and is penetrated by them.

Leonardo Boff—The mutual relationships among three co-equal persons within the Godhead have been argued to provide a model both for human relationships within communities and for Christian political and social theorizing.

Augustine—Developed the idea of relation within the Godhead, arguing that the persons of the Trinity are defined by their relations to one another. The Spirit is thus to be seen as the relation of love and fellowship between the Father and Son, a relation which Augustine believed to be foundational to the fourth gospel's presentation of the unity of will and purpose of Father and Son. The doctrine of Appropriation insists that the works of the Trinity are a unity; every person of the Trinity is involved in every outward action of the Godhead. Thus Father, Son, and Spirit are all involved in the work of creation, which is not to be viewed as the work of the Father alone.

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[17] McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 323-342.

Karl Barth—It is the word which must be spoken before revelation is even a possibility. The doctrine of the Trinity undergirds and guarantees the actuality of divine revelation to sinful humanity. Sinful humanity is fundamentally incapable of hearing the Word of God. Nevertheless, sinful humanity has heard the Word of God, in that this Word makes its sinfulness known to it.

Karl Rahner—Although we experience diversity and unity within the economy of salvation, that diversity and unity correspond to the way God actually is. Robert Jenson—Argues that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the proper name for the God whom Christians know in and through Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the Trinity thus centers on the recognition that God is named by Scripture, and within the witness of the church.

John Macquarrie—Approaches the doctrine of the Trinity from an existentialist perspective. Argues that the doctrine of the Trinity "safeguards a dynamic as opposed to a static understanding of God." The Father is to be understood as primordial Being. By this, we are meant to understand "the ultimate act or energy of letting-be, the condition that there should be anything whatsoever, the source not only of whatever is but of all possibilities of being." The Son is to be conceived as expressive Being. The Son is the Word or Logos, the agent of the Father in the creation of the world. He explicitly relates this form of Being to Jesus Christ: "Christians believe that the Father's Being finds expression above all in the finite being of Jesus." The Holy Spirit is to be understood as unitive Being, in that it "is the function of the Spirit to maintain, strengthen and, where need be, restore the unity of Being with the beings."

In his article entitled *The Good News of the Trinity*, Tim Chester referred to a Christian as a Person-in-relationship. Chester insisted that the key to integrating the one and the many is found in a Trinitarian understanding of personhood. Chester's writing further supports this project as illustrated in the following excerpt:[18]

> Because humanity is made in the image of the Trinity, we become truly human the more we image the Trinity. Personhood in the Trinity is not defined in opposition to others, but through relationship with others. 'The persons do not simply enter into relations with one another, but are constituted by one another in their relations.' The Father is the Father because he has a Son and so on. The Father, Son and Spirit are not persons because they operate independently of one another. They're persons in their relationships with one another. Their personhood is realized in the total interdependency of a perichoretic relationship. God is persons-in-relationship. Human personality can only be analogous to divine personality. But, made in the image of the Trinity as we are, human personhood is realized through relationships just as divine personhood is.
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> The doctrine of the Trinity shows us that relationships are essential for personhood. A 'person' is like a 'mother' or a 'son'. It has no meaning apart from relationships with other people… What defines a person is the fact they have relationships with other people. Colin Gunton talks about 'a doctrine of human perichoresis' in which 'persons mutually constitute each other, make each other what they are'. This is the opposite of individualism. Individualism defines personhood as difference. ..As René Descartes' famously declared, 'I think therefore I am'. A person is a solitary, rational individual. But true identity is found in relationships…But, because I'm defined by relationships, this uniqueness doesn't lead to a solitary, fragmented existence.
>
> We find ourselves by being related to others, not by distancing ourselves from them. We find ourselves in giving and receiving. We are neither wholly the active subject of individualism nor the passive object of collectivism. 'The heart of human being and action is a relationality whose dynamic is that of gift and reception.' This means that when we act in a way to diminish those relationships we dehumanize ourselves…We are re-made in the image of the triune God. Through our participation in Christ we participate in the divine community. John 17:20-26 is hard to read because the pronouns take us by surprise. 'I in them and you in …' says Jesus and we expect him to continue 'you in them' or 'them in me', but in fact he says 'you in me' (23). It's not clear whether Jesus is talking about the relationships within the Trinity or between the Trinity and believers. And that's because our participation in Christ means participation in the Trinity. We share the Trinitarian life. God is not only God-in-himself (what theologians call the 'immanent Trinity'). He is also God-for-us (what theologians call the 'economic Trinity'). He has not remained in himself. He has created a world. He has loved his world. And he goes on loving his world even after it rejected him. And now he has come to redeem his world in the incarnation of his Son and the sending of his Spirit.

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[18] Tim Chester, "The Good News of the Trinity," accessed April 9, 2014, http://www.theologynetwork.org/doctrine-of-god/the-good-news-of-the-trinity.

> Jesus repeatedly speaks of his being sent by the Father…We experience the Trinity through the sending of the Son and the sending of the Spirit. We participate in the Trinity as we receive eternal life from the Father in Jesus' name through the Spirit. So the Trinity is to be our pattern – we are to be like it, integrating the one and the many. But it's more than a pattern. It's our life. We participate in the Trinitarian community through the Holy Spirit. The church is the new humanity being re-made in the image of God. In the church we're striving through the Spirit to express the plurality and unity of God; to be the one and the many without compromising either. 'In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others' (Rom 12:5).

In his article entitled "An Evangelical Relational Theology," Derek Flood gives the following insights on A Personal Relationship with God As Theological Leitmotif:[19]

> Relationship is not only the goal of theology, it is also the leitmotif, i.e. the central guiding concept and interpretive framework through which all doctrine and Scripture must be understood… The main point of the Trinity is relationship. It shows loving relationship as inherent within the Godhead. Relationship is part of God's very being. The Trinity also describes the primary ways that God relates to humanity as Father, Son, and Spirit. The point of the Trinity here is not to understand it in the terms of some complex mathematical formula, a sort of divine Pythagorean theorem, but to recognize that the Trinity is all about relationship – who God is and how God relates to us.

This study of the doctrine of the trinity confirms the significance of developing relationships in ministry teams and new member assimilation as this writer was enlightened by Vickers' reference to Letty Russell, a liberal Protestant theologian who was known for her work in ecclesiology, who defined the church as "a community where everyone is welcomed." Vickers further noted that the new marks of the church, which will bring about church growth and renewal, are inclusivity, openness, tolerance, and diversity. Vickers says:

> …visitors may now be looking for something more basic and fundamental, namely, to hear what the Holy Trinity is like and to see what difference the Holy Trinity has made in the lives of Christians. It is to suggest that we may now be living in a time in which people are longing to encounter the sacred and in which they are searching high and low for the holy…the time has come for the church to

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[19] Derek Flood, "An Evangelical Relational Theology," accessed April 9, 2014, http// shark tacos.com/god/2007/06/relational-theology.html.

> regain her confidence that she really does have a gift of inestimable value to offer to the world – something that the world cannot readily acquire elsewhere, namely, incorporation into the Trinitarian life of God….Therein is the source of our hope for the future.[20]

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[20] Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground,* 106-107.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Effective ministry in the 21st century focuses on developing efforts for assimilating new members into the life of the church. This focus is evidenced in the different approaches modeled in this section. A common thread among the models is the significance of building relationships. Research has revealed that when new members are engaged in meaningful relationships within the church they are more likely to become connected in ministry, fulfilled spiritually, and less likely to become a victim of the infamous back door or revolving door syndrome. Specifically, churches, to include The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square, are becoming more mindful of the fact that members are quickly going out the back door due to this lack of connectivity; not being properly welcomed; not being intentionally engaged; not being encouraged to use their spiritual gifts in ministry. A solution to this problem is for churches to develop measures to close the back door by assessing their culture and practices, making the necessary adjustments, which foster ministry accountability, and ultimately put a stop to the revolving door syndrome.

As opposed to this task of developing a structured new member assimilation process being assumed by the pastor or any other single individual in the church, research has shown that a team approach has proven to be effective as connectivity and ministry service is facilitated by meaningful and intentional relationships. Thus, the following discussion of models and principles support this project, which is entitled "A Model for Ministry Development Team Approach to New Member Assimilation at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square."

The Power Of Team Leadership

A Ministry Development Team has proven to be an effective approach to building relationships, which result in engaging new members in ministry service. George Barna refers to this concept as a leadership team in his book entitled *The Power of Team Leadership*. According to Barna, a leadership team is a small group of leaders who possess complementary gifts and skills. They are committed to one another's growth and success and hold themselves mutually accountable. Together they lead a larger group of people toward a common vision, specific performance goals, and a plan of action.[1]

Barna used Moses as an example of how the Bible endorses the value and significance of team-based leadership:

> Moses was a fascinating leader. Reluctant to lead from the start, he learned many leadership lessons the hard way. Two insights stand out about Moses and his involvement with teams. First, he clearly recognized that while God called him to lead, he was hampered by severe limitations and was reticent to take on such responsibility. His reaction was to ask God to provide him with colleagues who could compensate for his overt weaknesses—that is, to let him lead as part of a team in which he would (by God's design) serve as the directing leader and captain of the team. In response, God provided other leaders, such as Joshua and Caleb, to share the burden. The second insight relates to the potential inefficiencies of solo leadership. Even though Moses had capable teammates, he retained much of the responsibility for directing the people, making public policy, and supervising the operations of their venture. In Exodus 18, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, pays Moses and his family a visit. He observes Moses' typical workday and is appalled by the bottleneck Moses has created by striving to be all things to all people. Jethro offers some simple advice: Divide the leadership duties into manageable portions and delegate some of the responsibility to a

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[1] George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 24.

> leadership team of other gifted servants. That advice changed Moses' life, freeing him to focus on aspects of directing the nation that only he could perform. Solo leadership can take you only as far as your individual capacity; increasing the leadership capacity through teamwork enhances the quality of life for the people as well as for you, their leader.[2]

In his discussion of benefits of using team leadership in ministry, Barna gives the following biblical endorsement:

> Our ministry principles and methods should be consistent with the Bible. In studying the lives of God's chosen leaders portrayed in Scripture, we find a variety of models. Jesus devoted His years of public ministry to developing a team of leaders who then led the early church after His death and resurrection. Paul was a devoted team practitioner, traveling with various teams. Moses led in tandem with Joshua and Aaron by his side. David and Nehemiah may be included among the other leaders who worked with teams. The Bible does not give a direct admonition to provide team-based leadership, but it does teach the value of community, unity, diversity, mutual trust, and the interrelationship of spiritual gifts—all aspects that lead to a team-based approach. Looking at the issue from a different angle, the Word clearly teaches that we are not to be independent of God nor overly self-confident nor strive to accomplish things in our own strength and power. Again, such a perspective moves us closer to embracing a team-oriented strategy for growing the church, because it teaches us to look outward, not inward.[3]

Barna goes on to give this account of *The Priesthood of Believers* in support of the team leadership concept:

> Team-based leadership is surely an extension of Ephesians 4 exhortation to equip the saints for ministry, in the same way that Peter and John discussed the importance of believers forming a priesthood of believers who serve together. God has entrusted a wealth of resources to His people—spiritual gifts, money, time, relationships, material possessions, opportunities, ideas, information—for the purpose of knowing, loving, and serving Him. In fact, team-oriented ministry is one of the means of deploying the gifts that people possess for maximum ministry potential. But just as Paul wrote that no one person has all of the spiritual gifts given by God, neither does any one individual have all the attributes necessary to lead with perfection. It is through mutual reliance that leaders achieve their highest potential.[4]

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[2] Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership*, 31.

[3] Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership*, 74.

[4] Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership*, 80.

Relational Ministry Teams

Acknowledging the need to develop the infrastructure of ministries in order for them to be prepared to effectively receive and assimilate new members at The Sanctuary, this project involves forming a ministry development team to facilitate the new member assimilation process. This approach is consistent with principles outlined by E. Stanley Ott in his book entitled *Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams*. Ott affirms, "The power of ministry teams lies in their unique capacity to generate genuine Christian fellowship, nurture disciples, develop leaders, and mobilize people for ministry."[5] Transitioning to ministry teams require change in attitudes and practice. Thus, Ott references using a strategic transition process such as the "The Eight-Stage Process of Creating Major Change" as introduced by John Kotter:

1. Establish a sense of urgency
2. Create the guiding coalition
3. Develop a vision and strategy
4. Communicate the change vision
5. Empower broad-based action
6. Generate short-term wins
7. Consolidate gains and produce more change
8. Anchor new approaches in the culture[6]

Ott expounded on the process of identifying and inviting ministry-team members, noting the importance of praying and asking God to send the team members and praying for their commitment to the vision and their productivity. Ott used as an illustration of how Jesus told his disciples, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field (Mt 9:38). Ott said when identifying prospective team members one should draw new team members from several possible sources and one should resist the pressure to simply fill positions. Ott also suggested these considerations and qualifications: search out a serving heart; consider a person's interests, spiritual gifts, and abilities; consider an individual's personal qualities; look for faith—a heart for God; look for hope—a heart and a passion for the task; look for love—a heart for people; look for a willingness to learn; look for faithfulness and humility; look for availability.[7]

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[5] E. Stanley Ott, *Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), back cover.

[6] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1966), 21.

It is important to note that team members must develop relationships in order to help others to develop relationships. Thus, Ott suggests employing the following seven threads of healthy ministry-team relationships: Thread 1) Spiritual disciplines; Thread 2) Face-to-face relationships; Thread 3) Confidentiality; Thread 4) Communications; Thread 5) Clear expectations; Thread 6) Loose-Tight Balance (Serve both with freedom and within boundaries); Thread 7) Loving loyalty (Freedom to express differences of opinion within the team while supporting team decisions to those outside the team).[8]

In the chapter entitled "Guiding the Team in Ministry to People," Ott expounded on the importance of team members loving and serving people while being task-oriented. According to Ott, this involves developing interpersonal ministry skills; employing the defining practices for fostering discipleship; employing the practices of attending and connecting; engaging in follow-through; and equipping team members for interpersonal ministry (praying together, follow through together, learn from each other, encourage each other).[9]

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[7] Ott, *Transform Your Church*, 81.

[8] Ott, *Transform Your Church*, 107.

Ott noted that connecting people to ministry is not the sole responsibility of the pastor, congregational leaders, or the ministry mobilization team. It is the responsibility of every ministry team—indeed, of every believer.[10] Ott gave this explanation of sending team members in ministry:

> Sending, one of the six defining practices of transformational ministry is the practice of connecting team members to specific ministry through interpersonal and task assignments in accord with their spiritual gifts and interests. We have "sending" in mind from the moment we first invite an individual onto the team. In this way we follow Jesus' example, wbich appointed the Twelve and then sent them to ministry. The very word apostle means sent one. The Twelve understood that their destiny was to be sent from the first moment Jesus invited them to be with him. Sending does not mean that a person leaves the team. Sending means that she accepts responsibility for a particular assignment and is sent to do it. This not only develops discipleship in the team member, it also enables the team to fulfill its vision. Sending is the key to mobilizing every team member for ministry, expanding the scope of the work of the team. Linking a person to a task that draws on her area of passion and interests as well as her willingness to serve, her spiritual gifts, her experiences, and her abilities is a critical facet of sending each individual to the right ministry.[11]

Ministry teams must be organized and structured in order to serve effectively. This is supported by Ott's chapter on "Formats for the Ministry Team Meetings" where he addressed considering the needs and lifestyles of team members when determining when to meet, how often to meet, schedules, agendas and ministry team bible study.

The effectiveness of ministry teams should be evaluated on a regular basis. Ott suggested facilitating this evaluation with a Ministry-Team Checklist. A ministry team is any gathering of God's people for the purpose of mutual encouragement in Christ and engagement in the service of Christ. Ministry-team life embraces three movements: discipleship, fellowship, and ministry. The team ministry has a double focus, with members attending to the people they serve in ministry, and attending to the tasks their ministry requires. Use this checklist periodically to assess how your team is doing.

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[9] Ott, *Transform Your Church*, 132.

[10] Ott, *Transform Your Church*, 157.

[11] Ott, *Transform Your Church*, 157.

The Beginning Ministry Team

- Element One: Clarify the team's vision
- Element Two: Identify the new team leader and the leadership core
- Element Three: Invite the beginning ministry team together
- Element Four: Engage the ministry team in discipleship and fellowship
- Element Five: Guide the ministry team in interpersonal ministry and organizing to accomplish its vision

The Ministry Team in Fellowship

- Have we established our team's covenantal agreements, and do we review them regularly?
- Are we nurturing friendship and discipleship among us?
- Are we enjoying small-group life as a team? Do we spend twenty minutes a meeting in "Word-Share-Prayer"?
- Are we sharing meals together? Do we have the dates for our quarterly meals in our datebooks?
- Have we made prayer partnerships among team members? Are we rotating prayer partners each month?

The Ministry Team in Personal Ministry

- Do our team members engage in personal ministry to those we are serving as a team?
- Are we praying for them by name?
- Do we follow through with people who are new, absent, or going through a difficult time?

- Do we focus on individuals using all six of the defining practices of interpersonal ministry (witness, prayer, care, word, "with me", send)?
- Do we bear witness to them?
- Do we pray for them?
- Do we care for them, showing hospitality to them?
- Do we impart the Word to them, spend time with them, and send them to serve?
- Have we engaged those whom we serve in small-group life?

The Ministry Team in Task Ministry

- Do we regularly review our ministry, think ahead, and determine our next steps?
- Are we assessing the needs of the people we serve before deciding what our tasks and programs are going to be?
- Do we have plans linking needs assessment and our defining vision with specific tasks, timelines, and deadlines?
- Have we sought to identify and engage each member's spiritual gifts and personal interests and abilities?
- Do our team members have task responsibilities that enable our joint ministry?
- Are we developing each member's gifts and leadership skills?[12]

An Inviting Church

This project allows The Sanctuary to develop a formal, organized process of assessing its ministry practices to determine what is working and what is not working in its effort to assimilate new members into the life of the church. The lack of historical focus on new member assimilation is not unique to The Sanctuary. In fact, this reality as well as this process is supported by an Alban Institute project documented by Roy Oswald and Speed Leas in their book entitled *The Inviting Church.* Oswald and Leas shared,

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[12] Ott, *Transform Your Church,* 183.

> What struck us most profoundly in our research is that those churches, which we studied had almost no formal assimilation systems whatsoever! For the most part what happened to help people become members was informal, unplanned, unsupervised, and unintentional. Most books about managing churches say that if you want to grow you should have an assimilation process that is clear, planned, agreed on, with trained volunteers and without gaps in helping the newcomers move from the outside of the church into its center. Though all that sounds like a great idea, from our work with these sixteen "successful" congregations we found that high commitment to an organized assimilation process was not the hallmark of the congregations we studied."[13]

The factors these authors identified that helped most with the attraction, introduction, and inclusion of new members into the life of a congregation were:

- A positive identity (showed through in the church's energy, belief in inclusion, and sense of having a unique identity)
- Congregational harmony (a high degree of good feeling among congregational members or a low degree of conflict and disunity; where proclamation from the pulpit is translated into action within the community; clergy skills in not only preaching "good news" but also in helping people learn to be more disciplined in their caring for one another.)
- The pastor's ability to generate enthusiasm (When we asked people what they were looking for in a preacher they responded in this order: 1) Good sermons; 2) Warmth; 3) Spiritual depth)
- The congregation's involvement in social action or social service (In our research we found that most of the churches which were successfully finding and integrating new members had some kind of outreach into the community: they allowed other community groups to use their facilities (which brought people who would otherwise be strangers to them into their building) and /or their members were active in other groups, including political parties, volunteer organizations, social change groups, social groups, and self-help groups)

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[13] Roy M. Oswald and Speed B. Leas, *The Inviting Church: A Study of New Member Assimilation* (New York, NY: The Alban Institute, Inc., 1987), 16.

- Small group programming (Friendship ties seem to be the strongest bonding agent for helping members stick to a congregation Often people join the church looking for new friends as well as religious experience.) [14]

A premise of this project is that helping new members to build relationships within the church will facilitate them becoming assimilated into the life of the church. In their formal exploration of the relationship Oswald and Leas generated the below list of tasks of the church in helping a member formally join the congregation:

- Identify what people need to cope with life pressures (People are coming to church looking for what they usually described as something that would help them cope better with themselves, their family, their job, their world. Each brought the hope that the church would provide answers or help them search.); Encourage a concern for the prosperity of the congregation (It is important for the church to clarify what it needs to successfully implement the ministries to which it has been called.)

- Become clear about what kind of church you have; Help people join the congregation (Almost all the churches we studied had developed some kind of class or program to help newcomers learn about the history of the church, what the church has to offer the new person, the church's basic theological stance, and to provide newcomers an opportunity to begin to explore some of the life issues they are bringing with them into the congregation.)

- Provide a ritual for belonging (In almost all the congregations in our study there was some sort of formal liturgical event during the Sunday worship experience that acknowledged the joining of newcomers. It is our perception that, when congregations make joining an important event in the life of the church and the newcomer by providing a class or classes and a special celebrative event in the parish, they are able to draw newcomers more deeply into a commitment.)[15]

This project focuses on caring as an essential element of the new member assimilation process. As a summary of their new member assimilation caring ideas, Oswald and Leas provided the below Assimilation Plan as written by lay persons of the All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, California, entitled "From the Parking Lot to the Vestry" (governing board of the congregation). These are the suggested ten steps in a five-year process of helping persons move from loneliness to leadership:

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[14] Oswald and Leas, *The Inviting Church*, 16.

[15] Oswald and Leas, *The Inviting Church*, 64.

1. Before They Choose to Attend – The assumption is that most persons will be attracted to our church because they think it may be a place in which they can find themselves needed, cared for, and made to feel worthwhile. Three ways to convey the caring dimension: newspaper advertisements, church literature, encourage members to invite their friends.

2. Parking Lot – Many successful Church builders have advanced the idea that the way we treat visitors when they enter our parking lot has a significant impact on their sense of how we feel about them. It seems to me that our parking lots need to have highly visible signs indicating everything people need to know about parking there. The lines for the spaces need to provide enough room for people to park comfortably, not just for the sake of their car doors but primarily because it is an announcement of how well we have planned for their arrival, and thus a sign about how much we care about their coming. And I wonder if we don't need to have persons assigned to the parking lots, as many churches do, whose function is to be helpful by directing people to available spaces, answering their questions, greeting them in a friendly way, making sure that their needs are met, and generally conveying the message that we are a church that cares. And how about a supply of umbrellas for those inadvertent Sunday rains…

3. That First Sunday in Church – If we care enough, we will make sure that from the moment a person reaches the church door until they are driving down the street toward home, their experience is one of feeling cared about. A) When the ushers pass a program it would be reassuring if they could emotionally greet with a smile and a friendly word. B) Perhaps there are ways in which the process of passing the peace could become a more effective means of transmitting caring in the congregation. Perhaps "old members" could be encouraged to make visitors feel especially welcome and to answer any of the questions they might have about participation in the worship experience. C) When the pastor makes the announcements, perhaps he could be even more aware that there are 15 or 20 visitors in the audience—dying to be cared for, needing to feel needed, desperate for some sense of mattering.

4. First-Year Periodic Involvement - New members should experience the Eucharist. Members of the vestry are essentially, if I understand correctly, shepherds of the flock. It would be tremendously helpful if new member were assigned a shepherd or a person from a shepherd's team to care for them during this first year of periodic involvement. If the pastor or a member of his staff could call new member on the phone once or twice during the year, write one or two letters on the basis of information received from the assigned shepherd, have picture taken with new member, even visit in their home, she

would feel another source of caring. If the shepherd would make sure that the new member is placed on the mailing list and if the new member is invited to all-church events specifically related to their interests, this would be a way to convince them of our concern.

5. New Members Class – Will be most effective if there is a balanced emphasis on both the didactic and experienced aspects, between the content of the teaching and what happens for people as they are taught. Four objectives: Interpersonal mixing; Explore and process the Christian faith; Opportunity to emphasize the distinctiveness of their beliefs, as well as the doubts they may encounter in herself; When completing the class, should know each member of the ministerial staff by name, and they should know new member's name. Moreover, new member should feel that at least ten laypersons in the church know them well, care for them deeply, and are fully aware of any unique situations they may have.

6. First Year After Becoming A Member – New member being ministered to in a way that enriches their life and equips them for ministry through excellent worship, a loving community, and a deepening conviction that they are valued by the congregation and the pastor. The central aspect of this first-year experience should be the sense of togetherness the new members develop as a heterogeneous group of Christian people. They should be encouraged to interweave themselves into the lives of as many of these persons as possible—even though there are significant differences in socio-economic class, race, educational background, occupation or profession, and length of involvement in the life of the church. The formal curriculum for this first year might well include three courses—each lasting for 6-10 weeks. These might be: A) The ten most critical aspects of our faith. B) Ten programs of outreach to the world from which you may wish to choose one or two. C) The fundamental qualities in the relationships of persons who are a part of the church of Jesus Christ.

7. Second Year After Membership – Begin to experience involvement with persons outside their own "entering class." These persons should be encouraged to be involved in at least one ongoing class each quarter of the year. Five such opportunities might be: A) A study and prayer group consisting of intense Bible study and opportunity for deep praying about personal matters. B) Time limited therapy group (s) for 8-10 persons lasting 20 sessions. These groups should be led by professional therapists within the membership, and the group should be structured to permit deep and caring involvement within the time limits set. C) Three to five special weekend workshops should be held during the year for the treatment of problems and concerns involving family, teenagers, substance abuse, etc. D) There should be at least one ongoing social group opportunity involving persons of varying

marital status. E) Out of this class there should be several outreach groups which include opportunity for personal relating and shared efforts to serve.

8. Third Year After Membership – A) Each person should have a shepherd during the entire time. B) Each person should be strongly encouraged to maintain regular involvement in one or more classes or groups at all times. C) Each person should be assigned one member of the pastoral staff who contacts this person on a personal basis at least two or three times per year. D) Each person should be reviewed at least annually by her shepherd and the relevant pastor in regard to how well they are being cared for and how fully they are involved in caring for others.

9. Fourth Year After Membership – By now they should be ready to: A) Be trained for special leadership positions in the church. B) Be ready to assume responsibility for providing a highly personalized caring community for newcomers. C) Be involved in giving generously and serving actively. D) Be involved in a regular review of how well their needs for caring are being met on emotional, spiritual, and physical levels.

10. Proceeding To Leadership – If newcomers are to further their growth, their continuing needs must be taken very seriously in a highly individualized way. If they have leadership skills, someone must care enough to assess those skills and encourage them to use them. If a newcomer encountered a five-year process like the one described in this paper, the probability of them having become aware of and committed to their own unique gifts seems assured. They have been caringly woven into the life of a congregation, and their life, the lives of their children and their children, will be significantly richer because of it.[16]

According to Oswald and Leas, it is essential for even the 'inviting church' to assess the effectiveness of its assimilation process via Newcomer Interviews and a New Member Assimilation Rating Scale. The authors categorized the interview questions as follows: Context and Search; Testing, Returning, Joining; Going Deeper. The authors categorized the rating scale as follows: Attracting/Recruiting; Testing; Returning/Affiliating; Joining; Going Deeper; Being Sent. In explaining the significant of this process Oswald and Leas note,

> The value of this process will be determined by the candor level of both individual and the group discussion. For your congregation to increase its ability

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[16] Oswald and Leas, *The Inviting Church*, 90.

> to incorporate members well, your committee will first need to get a clear fix on your present process, with its strengths and weaknesses. It's difficult to improve a parish process until there is an agreement on what is actually taking place.[17]

Understanding The Routes To Inclusion

Part of the challenge of assimilation is understanding how best to include new members into the life of the church based on their needs as well as their points of entry. Lyle Schaller in his discussion of *Four Routes to Inclusion* pointed out that adult new members who do not become part of a group, accept a leadership role, or become involved in a task during their first year tend to become inactive.[18] Schaller used a diagram to illustrate this point as follows:[19]

> *Type A Group*
> The ones least likely to become inactive members are represented by the arrow pointing to the Type A group in this diagram. These are the individuals who become part of a group, where membership in that face-to-face small group is meaningful, *before* formally uniting with that congregation. They are assimilated before they join. One example of this is the man who comes down out of the choir loft in his robe to join the other new members standing in front of the chancel as they are being received into membership one Sunday morning. He had been assimilated into the choir before he formally joined that congregation. A second example is the woman who came into membership via a circle in the women's organization. A third example is the couple who were invited by friends to attend an adult Sunday school class, they like what they found there and subsequently joined the church. The distinctive characteristics of these groups is that membership is open to and includes people who are not yet formally members of that congregation.
>
> *Type B Group*
> These people become members of a group, where membership in that group is meaningful, *after* uniting with that congregation. They gain a sense of acceptance and belonging through membership in that smaller face-to-face group. This is an especially important part of the assimilation process in congregations with a

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[17] Oswald and Leas, *The Inviting Church*, 104.

[18] Lyle E. Schaller, *Assimilating New Members* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 77.

[19] Schaller, *Assimilating New Members*, 76.

> hundred or more members where it is difficult for most newcomers to feel a real sense of acceptance except through participation in a subgroup of that congregation. Examples of these subgroups include the choir, a small group within the women's organization, a prayer group, the church council, a bowling team, an adult Sunday school class, a Bible study group, a men's fellowship group, a young adult group, a mutual support group, or a functional committee. The larger the congregation, the more important these small groups are in the assimilation of new members.
>
> *Role*
> Other new adult members are assimilated by accepting a *role* or office, which gives them a sense of belonging and causes them to identify with that congregation. This might be as a Sunday school teacher, counselor for a youth group, leader of a circle in the women's organization, treasurer of a Sunday school class, usher, president of the men's group, trustee, or member of the governing body of that parish.
>
> *Task*
> A fourth route that some new members take which helps them feel assimilated is to accept a *task* or job as a worker. These tasks usually do not have the formal status of an office and include such responsibilities as helping to clean the church on the first Sunday of every month, arranging for a coffee hour between Sunday school and worship, helping to count and package the Sunday morning offering, making telephone calls for the church, coming in one afternoon to help in preparing the weekly newsletter, helping in the kitchen for the monthly church suppers, or providing transportation for the youth. The remainder of the new adult members does not fit into any of these four categories. Most of them either have or are in the process of dropping into comparative inactivity.

The Sticky Church

A church with an effective relationship-based new member assimilation program can be termed a sticky church as coined by Larry Osborne in his book entitled *Sticky Church.* Larry Osborne says,

> Our churches need to be stickier. Stickier churches are healthier churches. They not only draw in spiritual window-shoppers and lead them to Christ; they also grow them up to maturity. And that, after all, is what Jesus called us to do. He didn't tell us to go into all the world and sign people up. He didn't tell us to draw big crowds. He told us to make disciples—a task that includes baptizing people

> *and* teaching then to obey *everything* he commanded. Frankly, that's a task that takes some significant time. To pull it off, we need to be sticky.[20]

Osborne went on to provide a working model of a sticky church that he says, "you can adopt and change until it's ready to be put into play in your unique ministry setting."[21] Osborne insists,

> What matters is not the size of the church or the slickness of the programming. What matters is that those who find ministry and relationships worthy of spontaneous word-of-mouth recommendations. When that happens, a church is primed to hold on to the people it already has *and* the people they bring with them.[22]

Osborne shared this account of three big changes that occurred in his church when he addressed the back door issue:

> 1. First, it changed the way I related to our lay leadership team. When most of my focus was on getting more people through the front door, the inner workings and interpersonal relationships of the board seemed more like a nuisance than an important part of our ministry. But a sticky church needs a healthy leadership team composed of people who genuinely like one another, share tbe same vision, and pull in the same direction. It's hard to close the back door when everyone is headed a different direction or there's an undercurrent of distrust and conflict. And if board members leave the church once their term is up, it's pretty tough to close the back door for everyone else.
>
> 2. The second big change was in the way I taught and led our congregation. Focusing on the front door aimed everything at two kinds of people: the not-yet Christian or the super saint who was ready to help me charge the hill. There wasn't much room for people who came to Christ but didn't grow at fast enough pace or carried lots of old baggage. Closing the back door meant finding a way to help these people discover a path to spirituality that worked for them, one that would enable them to finish the race – not by excusing sin but by accommodating their slower pace.
>
> 3. The third change involved launching a small group ministry focused primarily on building significant relationships rather than growing the church. The new groups we started soon morphed into the sermon-based small groups that

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[20] Osborne, *Sticky Church,* 13.

[21] Osborne, *Sticky Church,* 15.

[22] Osborne, *Sticky Church,* 28.

> we'll look at more closely later. Almost immediately we became a noticeably stickier and healthier church. The back door slammed shut, and to my surprise more people than ever began coming through the front door.[23]

In his presentation of data supporting the effects of not having an assimilation process in place, Osborne provided the following scenario for his readers to ponder:[24]

> Imagine two churches that each grew in attendance from 250 people to 500 over a ten-year period.
> Church A is a revolving door. It loses 7 people for every 10 it adds. To reach 500, it will have to add 834 new members or attenders (at a 30% long-term retention rate).
> Church B is a sticky church. It loses only 3 people for every 10 it adds. To reach 500, it has to add 357 new members or attenders (at a 70% long-term retention rate).
> On the surface, both churches appear to have doubled. But the revolving door church had to reach 834 new people to get there, while the sticky church only needed to reach 357.

Pathways Of Belonging

Gary McIntosh in his book entitled *The Exodus Principle, A 5-Part Strategy to Free Your People for Ministry* speaks about a culture of service and empowering people. McIntosh challenging churches with these questions: What can you do to cause your guests to become involved in your church? What Pathways are available now that new people may follow to establish ownership in your church? McIntosh says that when you answer these questions carefully and then follow them up with action, you'll find that people develop a loyalty to your church and your culture of service. McIntosh summarized *Pathways of Belonging* as follows:[25]

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[23] Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 28.

[24] Osborne, *Sticky Church*, 17.

[25] Gary McIntosh, *The Exodus Principle: A 5-Part Strategy to Free Your People for Ministry* (Nashville: TN, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 186.

- Pathways are strategically designed ministries, which assist new people to gain ownership in your church.
- Staff Receptions allow new guests to gain introductory information and meet the pastor and church staff.
- A Pastor's Dessert extends a warm welcome to guests who have attended your church at least three times.
- An Orientation Class provides an in-depth exposure to all aspects of your church culture.
- Small Groups offer new people a place to make friends and belong.
- Dinner Eights is another way to help new people meet others and make new friends.
- A New Believers Class teaches new believers and people from other churches the basics of the Christian faith, as well as explaining differences in church distinctive.
- A Placement Interview moves new people toward finding a place of ministry in your church.

Equipping The Saints

The goal of new member assimilation is equipping the saints in accordance with Ephesians 4. In his book entitled *Equipping the Saints, Mobilizing Laity for Ministry*, Michael J. Christensen devotes a chapter to the ministry of small groups on fostering community in a large church.[26] One model he presents is,

> Willow Creek Community Church where five meta-church principles undergird small-group life and church ministry: (1) limited span of care, (2) intentional leadership development, (3) relational discipleship, (4) the open chair, and (5) ministry coordination.[27]

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[26] Michael J. Christensen, *Equipping the Saints, Mobilizing Laity for Ministry* (Nashville: TN, Abingdon Press, 2000), 13.

[27] Christensen, *Equipping the Saints*, 56.

Christensen further notes that Willow Creek's five major types of groups include Community groups (Typically organized by relational affinity within geographical regions.), Serving groups (The gathering point is accomplishment of a task.), Seeker groups (Led by believers, provide a safe place for nonbelievers to ask questions and investigate Christianity.), Support groups (Generally fall under the pastoral care ministries of the church and are designed for individuals struggling with a specific issue.), and Interest-based groups (Affinity for a specific interest such as sports, computers, or a desire to be a better parent gathers many into groups).[28]

Moving Members Into Ministry

In his book entitled *Membership Matters,* Chuck Lawless gives the following insights from effective churches on new member classes and assimilation:[29]

- Our analysis of the data indicates that the churches in our survey were doing better than they thought in involving members in ministry. On average 69 percent of the new members joined these churches in the last two years attended membership classes. Notice, then, our findings after asking the follow-up question, "What percentage of members who have joined within the last two years are currently active in the church – attending worship at least twice a month and involved in some other type of activity or ministry in the church?"

- In the churches we surveyed, over 70 percent of the members who joined in the last two years remained involved in the church. Our research did not ask specific details about the "type of activity or ministry"; nor can we show that the 70 percent who remained involved were only those who attended membership classes. Nevertheless, we are confident these churches point to some important principles for moving members into ministry.

- A Ministry Placement Strategy Must Be In Place: Fifty percent of the churches we studied used a spiritual gifts inventory in their membership classes, and most of the remaining churches did so in follow-up class. Never, though did we see a church that relied exclusively on the inventory as the means of ministry placement.

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[28] Christensen, *Equipping the Saints*, 60.

[29] Chuck Lawless, *Membership Matters* (Grand Rapids: MI, Zondervan, 2005), 100–103.

- Indeed, out team often saw placement processes based on Rick Warren's SHAPE (Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, Experiences) concept, Wayne Cordeiro's DESIGN (Desire, Experiences, Spiritual gifts, Individual style, Growth phase, Natural abilities) program, or the *BodyLife* model. Pastors like Saddleback's Warren, and Cordeiro, who leads New Hope Christian Fellowship in Honolulu, Hawaii, challenge their members to discover their spiritual gifts only in the context of looking holistically at themselves. God works through our life experiences, our desires, our spiritual gifts, our personalities, and our abilities in order to prepare us to do ministry in his church.

- Whether in a membership class or another class, new members in our study were led to ask, "How has God created me, molded me, and changed me so that I am who I am – ready to be further equipped for service?" Gifts inventories, personality tests, and personal interviews were typically part of the process. The DISC profile was one of the more popular personality tests utilized by these churches.

- First Southern Baptist Church of Salina, Kansas, is one of the surveyed churches that uses the *BodyLife Journey* program for ministry placement. *BodyLife* is an intentional discipling process designed to guide believers into ministry. Associate pastor Mike Murray told us that each new member is assigned an encourager, who plays a key role in getting the member to attend a *BodyLife* workshop.

- There, each new member develops his or her SERVE (Spiritual gifts, Experiences, Relational style, Vocational skills, Enthusiasm) profile and maps out a "Personal Action Plan" for getting involved in the church. The action plan includes commitments to support corporate and personal worship, evangelize the lost, attend discipleship courses, build relationships through a small group, and minister based on one's SERVE profile. Like so many of the churches we studied, their ministry placement strategy is an *ongoing process* that requires commitment and accountability.

Essential Elements For Assimilation

In his book entitled *Beyond Church Growth*, Robert Logan notes the following characteristics of a church that is assimilating newcomers:

A Healthy Climate (Love, Vision and Faith, Sense of Significance, Sense of Expectancy, A Positive Spirit, Friendliness); *A Caring Body of Believers* (willingness to offer top-quality services to the newcomers; having a strategically coordinated method of addressing the emergency needs of those God brings into your path; a contact person in the church, or the ability of experienced office staff to make qualified referrals); *An Interesting and Inspiring Worship Service* (Should move its participants through the full range of human emotion: laughter, excitement, introspection, and perhaps grief, gratitude, exuberance, and praise. Newcomers must see transparency in worship leaders.); *Cultivation of Open Relationships* (There must be plenty of opportunities for developing meaningful relationships where souls can be bared and quality listening can occur. This happens best in cell groups.)[30]

Logan suggests specific action steps for investing in and assimilating newcomers:

- Keep the vision of making new disciples ever before your congregation. (Provide the permission, freedom, and resources for believers to spend time building relationsbips.
- Make heroes out of people who are building relationships and pioneering dynamic groups.
- Establish an assimilation-tracking system that monitors the worship service attendance and follows up newcomers to help incorporate them into the church.
- Evaluate your newcomer-orientation process.
- Survey your people and leaders to help discover what your training agenda for next year should include.[31]

Logan provides below sample of A Tracking and Assimilation Flow Chart:[32]

1st Visit

- Pastoral Welcome Letter
- Welcome Phone Call
- Welcome Letter to Parent

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[30] Robert E. Logan, *Beyond Church Growth, Action Plans for Developing a Dynamic Church* (Grand Rapids: MI, Baker Book House Company, 1989), 110-112.

[31] Logan, *Beyond Church Growth*, 116-117.

[32] Logan, *Beyond Church Growth*, Appendix Two.

- Child Gets Card

2nd Visit

- Add to Weekly Newsletter Mailing List

3rd Visit

- Associate Pastor Letter (Invites to Newcomer's Class)
- Child enrolled in Bible Class (letter to parents)

4th Visit

- (If within 8 weeks) Add to church directory

Missed 3-8 Weeks?

- "We missed you" Letter
- Absentee Phone call
- Welcome Back Letter
- Phone Call to Child

Initial Involvement

- Pastor's Class
- Discovery Group
- Ministry Involvement
- "Side Door" Ministry
- Inquirer's Group

Active Church Life

- Care Groups
- Regular Ministry
- Giving

- Witness
- Worship

Nurturing; Joining; Making The Connection

In his article entitled *Visitor Assimilation: It's Not Rocket Science*, Charles Arn shares these relational practices essential to an effective new member assimilation process:[33]

- Nurturing: Building Relationships With Newcomers
  Try asking your new members the same question we've asked more than 40,000 laypeople in the past 11 years: "Why did you join this church?" If your people are typical, 75% to 90% of them will mention "a friend or relative" as a key part of the process. Relationships have been the most important factor in the expansion of Christianity since the first century. An effective assimilation strategy, therefore, will create a "greenhouse" in which new relationships between newcomers and church members are nurtured. In my own case, an important part of our eventual church selection grew from an invitation I received two days after our first visit. It was an invitation to become part of the church softball team. My wife was later invited to be part of a women's Bible study.

- Joining: Affiliation And Membership
  A missing assimilation link in many churches is the Inquirer's Class, where anyone can learn more about the church no strings attached. Our experience is that 85% of all graduates from such a class decide to join. Have high expectations for your new members. St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Trenton, Mich., tells its class that every member is expected to: 1) be regular in worship, 2) be involved in a small group, 3) give financially and 4) have a ministry in the church consistent with their spiritual gift. No wonder St. Paul's has a high member-to-attendance ratio and a low dropout rate.

- Make The Connection
  Assimilation. It's not rocket science. But, neither is it all intuitive. There's much to learn. But it's well worth our effort to learn it. For there's no doubt that the heart of God is filled with joy when the sheep He places in our care are all present and accounted for—in your church.

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[33] Charles Arn, "Visitor Assimilation: It's Not Rocket Science," accessed April 9, 2014, http://outreachmagazine.com.

Finding Them And Keeping Them

Thom S. Rainer in his chapter on "Assimilation, Reclamation, and Church Growth" of his book entitled *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* has this to say about the importance of closing the back door,[34]

> When churches seek to get people into their fellowship, they are attempting to open the front door. Keeping those members in the church, active, and fulfilled, is called closing the backdoor. Keeping the backdoor closed is a major problem in most churches today. A church with half of its membership in attendance is considered successful by most standards . . . What can we do to regain the spirit of the early church where Christians "devoted themselves to the . . . fellowship" and where "all the believers were together" (Acts 2:42, 44). How can we assimilate new members, and how can we reclaim inactive members? Those are the two backdoor questions.

Rainer references McIntosh and Martin's book *Finding Them and Keeping Them: Effective Strategies for Evangelism and Assimilation in the Local Church* as he shares this formula for assimilating new members,[35]

> Gary McIntosh and Glen Martin, in their book *Finding Them, Keeping Them,* identified five strategies for assimilation. Friendship with other church members is the first step toward a new members' assimilating into the church. Lyle Schaller says that "there is considerable evidence which suggest that at least one-third, and perhaps as many as one-half, of all Protestant church members do not feel a sense of belonging to the congregation of which they are members. They have been received into membership, but have never felt they have been accepted into the fellowship circle."
>
> Church members obviously need to develop relationships with new members. This is rarely successful with programs. Instead regular emphasis on friendliness and openness motivates members to welcome newcomers into their friendship circles. One family in a church that I pastored in Louisville, Kentucky, invited most new members to a meal in their home. As church leaders encourage and applaud such actions, other members will follow their example. An even more successful approach is for the relationship with the new member to begin before the new member comes into the church. If we as leaders are successful in motivating church members to invite and bring their friends to church, evangelism and assimilation can become one victorious step.

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[34] Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: TN, Broadman & Holman, Publishers, 1993), Chapter 28.

[35] Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, Chapter 28.

As important as relationships are in closing the backdoor it is important that new members become involved in ministry in the church. A review of chapter 20 might help at this point. Are we as church leaders giving our laity "permission" to start and become involved in ministries? Or is involvement in the church limited to redundant committees, where the committee members are chosen by a select group? Do we encourage or require spiritual gift assessments to involve people in ministry according to their giftedness? Or are we choosing June or John for the kitchen committee because they are not doing anything else? Do we teach, preach, and show that ministry is done by the people of God, rather than by some artificial ecclesiological hierarchy? Ministry involvement, real ministry involvement, is a key to assimilation.

In the next chapter we examine the impact of small groups on various factors, including assimilation. For now it is important to note the beauty of small groups in creating a sense of belonging. What is "small"? Most studies indicate that ten is a maximum size where everyone can have the opportunity to interact with the rest of the group. Sunday School, therefore, can operate within the dynamics of a small group, but only if the class is small. Church members in classes of twenty, thirty, forty, or more are not reaping the benefits of a small group. Though I am not aware of any studies in this area, I sense that small group dynamics may operate better in a non-church location.

The importance of vision has been mentioned frequently in this book, but it cannot be overstated. A clear, Great Commission vision creates a sense of "being on the team." Who has not identified with a sports team that has a vision for being the best? You see fans wearing their hats, displaying their bumper sticker, and naming their children after the stars. A similar dynamic can happen with a church that has a clear, challenging, and exciting vision. New members are assimilated because they identify with the team and its vision.

The final key to assimilation, say McIntosh and Martin, is spiritual growth. Such is the discipleship thrust of the Church Growth Movement. The deeper the level of discipleship, the more likely assimilation is to take place. Church leaders must seek innovative and challenging ways for all members to have opportunities to grow in Christ.

The Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

Peter Scazzero, in his book entitled *The Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, shares these thoughts, practices, and teaching on intentional connections at his church as follows "Once people begin their journey with Jesus Christ and join a church or community, our first task is to help them connect with God and grow spiritually. Our sincere hope is that they will allow the Word and the Spirit to transform each aspect of their lives. We teach them to:[36]

- Attend church each week for worship, the Word, and, in some traditions, to participate in the Lord's Supper;
- Have a quiet time (some call it devotions), preferably at the start of each day;
- Participate in a small group or Sunday school class for spiritual nourishment, fellowship, and the study of Scripture;
- Trust God by giving financially to God's work;
- Let Christ inform the way they behave at work, home, school, and in all other relationships;
- Discover and use their spiritual gift inside the church and serve somewhere – as an usher, greeter, small-group leader, or board member;
- Evangelize by telling others who do not know Jesus how they were "blind but now see" and inviting them to church events as appropriate; and
- Attend retreats and conferences, read books, and listen to tapes to continue growing.

Conclusion

This project entitled "A Model for Ministry Development Team Approach to New Member Assimilation at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square" proposes to identify measures to close the back door by assessing culture and practices, making the necessary adjustments, which foster ministry accountability, and ultimately put a stop to the revolving door syndrome. Relational concepts and techniques gleaned from this theoretical foundations paper were incorporated into this project and in accordance with Ephesians 2:19-22 MSG…

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[36] Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc. 2006), 39-40.

> "That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home."

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

While many 21st century churches have focused on attracting new members, building projects, generating ministries, and "doing church," new members have not been effectively assimilated into the life of the church. Many newcomers have become new members who have joined churches, which lack an official process to effectively involve them in ministry. Thus, new members have been joining churches and then leaving shortly thereafter without becoming connected to the ministry and allowed to operate in their spiritual gifts, creating the "back door" and "revolving door" syndromes.

Philip Richter and Leslie Francis conducted research in the 1990s and identified eight causes why people leave churches.[1]

1. High cost of commitment verses the benefits received drives them away.
2. Parental influence.
3. Feeling marginalized/broken relationships/conflicts within the church.
4. Stages of Faith Development - A church's general faith stage level may mismatch a person who is moving from one stage to another.
5. Changing Social Values – my values are different from those who go to church. It feels like 'church' is on another planet.

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[1] Philip Richter and Leslie Francis, "Closing the Back Door of the Church: Understanding Why People Leave," accessed May 28, 2014, http://www.grovebooks.co.uk/.

6. Loss of faith.
7. Changes/chances – Patterns of life and unintentional leaving.
8. Unfulfilled expectations.

The challenge is for churches to develop a structured new member assimilation process that will shift from pastor or designated leader led, to a team approach. Research has shown that a team approach has proven to maximize connectivity and ministry service via meaningful and intentional relationships. The ministry development team has proven to be an effective approach to building relationships, which result in engaging new members in ministry service. George Barna refers to this concept as a leadership team in his book entitled *The Power of Team Leadership.* According to Barna,

> A leadership team is a small group of leaders who possess complementary gifts and skills. They are committed to one another's growth and success and hold themselves mutually accountable. Together they lead a larger group of people toward a common vision, specific performance goals, and a plan of action.[2]

Shirley Rose, in her article in the *Ministry Development Journal* entitled "Group Process as a Tool for Ministry," notes,

> Group process is not a panacea. When properly used it becomes an educational tool, which liberates, turning fear into the courage to risk; turning timidity into confidence, "that my gifts are important"; turning blindness into appreciation of the gifts and strength of others; turning insensitivity into caring; turning isolation into shared vision and purpose.[3]

The project used a qualitative research design to develop a model for ministry development team approach to new member assimilation at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square.

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[2] George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2001), 24.

[3] Shirley Rose, "Group Process as a Tool for Ministry," *Ministry Development Journal,* no. 4 (Spring/Summer 1984): 45.

Methodology

Definitions

Assimilation: The common sharing and fusing of folkways and mores, of laws and all other features of two or more distinctive cultures by people who have come into direct relations with each other.[4] A process, for the most part conscious, by which individuals and groups come to have sentiments and attitudes similar to those held by other persons or groups in regard to a particular value at a given time.[5]

"The process of seamlessly becoming a part of something that already exists, taking on its life, and enriching the life of the organism that already exists. The relationship is symbiotic; that is, all elements contribute each to the other, nourishing each other. This process of assimilation carries benefits for everyone in the church—for those who enter into this new relationship as well as for those who have been in the church, whether for a few years or many decades. Assimilation leads to spiritual strengthening. Assimilation allows people to fortify one another through their spiritual gifts. Assimilation lessens the burdens on others. But whether your church members are new, returning, or transferring, I pray that the assimilation process in your churches leads to the spiritual fortification of the saints, "so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:12, 13, NIV)."[6]

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[4] Kimball Young, *Introductory Sociology* (New York, NY: American Book Co., 1939), 495.

[5] H. G. Duncan, "A Study in the Process of Assimilation," *American Sociological Society*, XII: 184-7.

Best Practice: A method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark.[7]

Team: A group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a task, job, or project. Team members 1) operate with a high degree of interdependence; 2) share authority and responsibility for self-management; 3) are accountable for the collective performance; and 4) work toward a common goal and shared rewards(s). A team becomes more than just a collection of people when a strong sense of mutual commitment creates synergy, thus generating performance greater than the sum of the performance of its individual members.[8]

Problem Statement

Although persons are joining The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square in large numbers, many are going out of the 'back door' without being assimilated into the life of the ministry, minimizing the call of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Larry Osborne in his book entitled *Sticky Church* emphasizes,

> We've often become so focused on *reaching* people that we've forgotten the importance of *keeping* people. Stickier churches are healthier churches. They not only draw in spiritual window-shoppers and lead them to Christ; they also grow them up to maturity. What matters is not the size of the church or the slickness of the programming. What matters is that those who come find a ministry and relationships worthy of spontaneous word-of-mouth recommendations. Churches

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[6] Willie Hucks II, "The Benefits of Assimilation," accessed February 20, 2014, https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2010/02/the-benefits-of-assimilation.

[7] BusinessDictionary.com, "Best Practices," accessed February 20, 2014, http://www.business dictionary.com/.

[8] BusinessDictionary.com, "Team," accessed February 20, 2014, http://www. business dictionary.com/definition/team.html.

> that close the back door effectively do so by serving their congregations so well that the people don't want to leave.[9]

Hypothesis

If a ministry development team is established to develop, implement, and monitor a process where new members of The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square are intentionally assimilated into the life of the ministry, new members will become rooted into the culture of the church, emerging as disciples who are deeply committed and active members.

Project Purpose

The project centered on designing an effective disciple-making assimilation model for The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square to develop ministries and increase the number of persons assimilating into the life of the church, using their gifts to minister. The project captured the functions of a ministry development team and the essence of the experience of a group of new members assimilating into the church. These statements made by George Peck in his article on *The Call To Ministry: Its Meaning and Scope* support this purpose:

> If people are to minister, as I am conceiving of ministry, there must be a calling, gifts, preparation, recognition, commissioning, support and accountability. And that means, on the side of the one called and of the church, a level of seriousness which is at present hardly discernible in any denomination.[10]

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[9] Larry Osborne, *Sticky Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 13-31.

[10] George Peck, "The Call To Ministry: Its Meaning and Scope," *Ministry Development Journal*, (Spring 1983): 10.

Project Participants

A ministry development team (Context Associates) was invited via email to participate in a ten-week process of assessing the current new members' process and developing a model for new member assimilation process at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square. The ministry development team of The Sanctuary was comprised of eleven volunteers who share the vision, understood the significance, and possessed the skill sets to develop a structured approach to new members' assimilation. The team consisted of Sanctuary ministry leadership and laypersons, seven females and four males.

Also identified were a sample of new members to participate in a New Members Class and complete a pretest and posttest survey. The ages of the project participants ranged from young adults (18-40) to seniors (over 60 years).

The Collection of Data

Data for this project was triangulated. Data was collected via 1) Interviews with best practice churches (ministry leader surveys); 2) Observation journals from Ministry Development Workshop and Ministry Fair; and 3) Pre-posttest surveys of a sample group of new members. The results obtained from this data were used to develop four goals of A Model for Ministry Development Team Approach to New Member Assimilation at The Sanctuary At Kingdom Square.

Goals of the New Member Assimilation Process

The first goal was for new members to establish meaningful relationships. The second goal was for new members to understand the core values of the church and ministry functions. The third goal was for new members to acquire knowledge of their spiritual gifts and opportunities to serve in accordance with their spiritual gifts. The fourth goal was for new members to adapt a positive attitude about remaining active members of the church.

Implementation

A ten-week (August 2014 – December 2014) process was used to develop a ministry development model for new member assimilation at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square. The following tasks were completed during that time:

1. Meetings with Ministry Development Team/Context Associates – On Saturday, August 16, 2014, the first meeting was held with Context Associates who were identified to serve as the Ministry Development Team. Each signed a Context Associates Agreement. Face-to-face meetings and weekly conference calls were held with the Team to discuss the purpose of the project, the role of Context Associates, project tasks, and the status of the project. Context Associates were assigned to each project task and were instrumental in developing workshop, journals, forms, manuals, protocols, charts, graphs, and flowcharts; conducting interviews, surveys, new member classes, spiritual gift assessments, and ministry fair; establishing Ministry Care Teams; and training ministry leaders.

2. Current New Members Process – In order to gain an understanding of the current new member's process, on several occasions throughout this project the researcher and Context Associates observed the intake process, new member classes, and new member orientations. Observation of the new member intake process revealed opportunities to improve the process to include having a designated intake area; offering hospitality items such as tissue, water, snacks; allowing more time for one-on-one engagement; and decreasing amount of information provided, number of persons speaking, and process time. Also, the researcher interviewed the Minister to New Members, obtained documentation of the original new member process, as well as suggestions for process improvements.

3. Best Practice Church Interviews – Five churches were identified that demonstrated effective new member assimilation practices based on personal experiences of the Team and referrals from the Pastor of The Sanctuary. These churches were University Park Baptist Church located in Charlotte,

North Caronia where Bishop Claude Alexander is the Pastor; New Psalmist Baptist Church located in Baltimore, Maryland where Bishop Walter Scott Thomas is the Pastor; Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church located in Phoenix, Arizona where Bishop Alexis A. Thomas is the Pastor; Largo Community Church located in Mitchellville, Maryland where Dr. H. Jack Morris is the Senior Pastor; and First Mount Zion Baptist Church located in Dumfries, Virginia where Rev. Dr. Luke Torian is the Pastor. Contact persons were identified at each best practice church and the interviews were conducted September 1 – October 31, 2014 using a specific list of questions. The results of the best practice church interviews were shared with ministry leaders at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square. The ministry leaders completed surveys to assess the effectiveness of the best practice information in helping new members to become assimilated into their respective ministries.

4. Ministry Fair – On Sunday, October 26, 2014 a Ministry Fair was held in the narthex of The Sanctuary. The researcher and Context Associates assisted ministries in developing and posting at their tables spiritual gifts essential to serve in that ministry. Context Associates escorted a sample group of new members to ministry tables to obtain literature and discuss functions of each ministry. New members were connected with ministries in accordance with results of their Spiritual Gifts Assessment. Context Associates maintained open dialogue with new members, which allowed for assessment of the effectiveness of the Ministry Fair via an observation journal.

5. New Members Class – The researcher attended, observed, and addressed a New Members Class taught by the New Members Minister in accordance with established agenda.

6. A Spiritual Gifts Assessment was administered during the New Members Class.

7. Pre-test Surveys were conducted during the New Members Class.

8. Post-test Surveys were conducted via online Survey Monkey four weeks after the New Members Class.

9. Visitors Connection Protocol – A Visitors Connection Protocol was developed and presented at a Ministry Leaders Meeting.

10. Newly Developed Assimilation Process – Based on observation of current new member process, input from ministry leaders, and information from best practice church interviews, the Team developed a New Member Assimilation Process and presented to ministry leaders at Ministry Development Workshop and Ministry Leaders Meeting.

11. Ministry Development Workshop – A sample group of ministry leaders were invited to attend a 4 hour workshop at The Sanctuary on September 27, 2014 to learn the significance of new member assimilation and how organizing their ministry structure and practices would facilitate new members remaining as active members of The Sanctuary. An agenda was developed, which included discussion of a template to develop ministry manuals to facilitate a structured relational approach for new members joining each ministry. The agenda also included a discussion of guidelines for establishing Ministry Care Teams within their ministries to connect with new members when they join. The researcher and Context Associates conducted the workshop. The workshop was set up with round tables to facilitate small group discussions. The workshop was opened and closed with prayer by a representative from the Sanctuary Prayer Ministry. Best practices of other churches were shared with the ministries. Ministry leaders were provided benchmark dates to complete their manuals, implement their practices, and submit their monthly coverage schedules and monthly status reports. The researcher and Context Associates maintained open dialogue with workshop participants during and after the workshop, which allowed for assessment and documentation of the effectiveness of the workshop.

The Results of the Model

Major Finding #1 - New members were able to establish meaningful relationships after going through the newly developed New Members Assimilation Process at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square.

First Data Exemplar - The interviews with best practice churches revealed several opportunities for new members to establish meaningful relationships to include connections made in the Decision Rooms when persons join the church; assignment of "First Friends"; participation in small groups, ministries, Sunday School, Bible Study, New Members Class, and Life Groups; care provided by Care Teams, Yoke Partners, Watch care Ministry, Congregational Care Ministry, Diaconate Ministry; and ongoing interaction with Pastors and First Ladies.

In support of this finding, 85% of Sanctuary ministry leaders surveyed indicated that the information from the best practice interviews definitely allows their ministry to develop ways to help new members establish meaningful relationships at The Sanctuary. 15% indicated probably.

Second Data Exemplar - The Ministry Development Workshop Observation Journal revealed that this assimilation training positively impacted ministry leaders. The journal reflected ministry leaders' discussion and understanding that "Ministry involvement helps provide a friendly and personalized entre into nurturing relations. Once relationships are developed, members become acclimated to the church and will be likely to get and stay involved in church life."

The Ministry Fair Observation Journal revealed that participating in the Ministry Fair positively impacted new members. Interaction with new members lead journaler to note "I believe the new members were able to establish meaningful relationships at the Ministry Fair because there were at least two Ministry Representatives at each table who warmly greeted all visitors. The Representatives were knowledgeable about the Ministry's purpose within the Body of The Sanctuary."

Third Data Exemplar - In support of this finding, when new members were asked the question "How many times have you been contacted since you became a member of The Sanctuary?" their responses for four to six times moved from 20% on the pre-test to 50% on the post-test survey.

This finding revealed further opportunities for new members to establish meaningful relationships, which will result in more effective assimilation, especially during the intake process and through use of social media.

Major Finding #2 - New members demonstrated an understanding of the values of the church and ministry functions after going through the newly developed New Members Assimilation Process at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square.

First Data Exemplar - Interviews with best practice churches revealed that the values of the church and ministry functions were discussed at length in New Member Classes and New Member Orientations. Welcome Packets and ongoing interactions with existing church members served as other sources of this information.

Sixty-nine percent of Sanctuary ministry leaders surveyed indicated that the information from the best practice church interviews allows their ministry to develop ways to help new members understand the core values of The Sanctuary and our ministry functions. Fifteen percent indicated probably and 15% indicated unable to rate.

Second Data Exemplar - The journal from the Ministry Development Workshop reflected ministry leaders' appreciation for the fact that "part of the assimilation orientation discussed the Sanctuary core values and ministry functions," which would be shared with new members who join their respective ministries.

Interaction with new members participating in the Ministry Fair lead journaler to note "I believe the new members were able to understand the core values of the Sanctuary and ministry functions because as new members, during their Orientation Training, they had already been introduced to the Core Values. At the Fair they were able to see the relational connectivity of the values as they were seen at the various other ministry tables they visited."

Third Data Exemplar - In support of this finding, when new members were asked to "Name three (3) of the seven (7) core values of The Sanctuary." Their responses moved from 100% having no response on the pre-test to 10% having no response on the post-test survey.

This finding confirmed that intentional measures are effective in ensuring that new members understand core values and ministry functions at The Sanctuary. This researcher later addresses the concept of electronically tracking ongoing ministry efforts.

Major Finding #3 - New members acquired knowledge of their spiritual gifts and opportunities to serve in accordance with their gifts after going through the newly developed New Members Assimilation Process at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square.

First Data Exemplar - Interviews with best practice churches indicated that new members took spiritual gifts assessments during New Members Classes and Discipleship Classes. Also, new members were encouraged by their First Friends, Yoke Partners, etc. to join ministries in accordance with their spiritual gifts.

In support of this finding, 85% of Sanctuary ministry leaders surveyed indicated that the information from the best practice church interviews definitely allows their ministry to develop ways to help new members acquire knowledge of their spiritual gifts and opportunities to serve in accordance with their spiritual gifts. Fifteen percent indicated probably, 7% indicated maybe, and 7% indicated unable to rate.

Second Data Exemplar - The journal from the Ministry Development Workshop reflected ministry leaders' new-found emphasis on the fact that "Through the spiritual gifts assessment, after becoming connected to a ministry new members can use their gifts for ministry work."

Interaction with new members participating in the Ministry Fair lead journaler to note "Prior to the Ministry Fair, the new members had already experienced a thoughtprovoking and effective Training exercise which allowed them to identify their top five spiritual gifts. Seeing the "Gift List" at the Fair just reinforced what could be applied to honor God and to strengthen a ministry's mission and vision."

Third Data Exemplar - When new members were asked the question "Have you ever taken a Spiritual Gifts Assessment?" their "Yes" responses moved from 0 on the pre-test to 100% on the post-test survey. When asked the question "Do you know what your spiritual gifts are?" the "Yes" responses moved from 40% on the pre-test to 100% on the post-test survey. When asked the question "Have you had the opportunity to communicate with a member of the ministry your spiritual gift is best suited for?" The "Yes" responses increased by 5% on the post-test surveys.

This finding confirmed that while the spiritual gifts assessment tool is very effective, more intentional connections and electronic tracking would enhance new members being connected with ministries in accordance with their spiritual gifts.

Major Finding #4 - New members adapted a positive attitude about remaining active members of the church after going through the newly developed New Members Assimilation Process at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square.

First Data Exemplar - Interviews with best practice churches revealed positive attitudes about remaining at the church as a result of positive first impressions made by Parking Lot Greeters and Hospitality Greeters; ongoing ministry relationships; and monitoring tools which track new member satisfaction, involvement, and longevity at the church.

Eighty-five percent of Sanctuary ministry leaders surveyed indicated that the information from the best practice church interviews definitely allows their ministry to develop ways to help new members adapt a positive attitude about remaining at The Sanctuary and being an active member. Fifteen percent indicated maybe.

Second Data Exemplar - The journal from the Ministry Development Workshop reflected, "As a result of the information that was presented, Leaders were sensitized to the goals of engagement. Training centered on how to foster radical hospitality and a warm spirit of Christian friendliness to all who enter the Sanctuary doors. This will make perspective members and current members want to keep coming back."

Interaction with new members participating in the Ministry Fair lead journaler to note "In listening to the new members, I discovered that many did not feel valued in other places or relationships in their lives. Within the Sanctuary, new "family" members find a place where they feel accepted and embraced. The new family member can identify their gifts and be encouraged to want to stay and grow spiritually. Through various forms of ministry and fellowship, new family members interact with a body of believers who have similar life concerns and challenges. No longer does a new family member have to think of themselves as unimportant or unable to be an effective kingdom building servant!"

Third Data Exemplar - In support of the finding, when new members were asked the question "On a scale of 1 to 4 how welcome do you feel as a new member of The Sanctuary?" their responses for "Very Welcome" was 100% on the pre-test survey and 100% on the post-test survey. When asked on the post-test survey "On a scale of 1 to 4, "How good do you feel about remaining an active member of The Sanctuary;" 100% responded "Very Good."

This finding revealed opportunities to electronically assess and track our church's effectiveness in helping new members adapt a positive attitude about remaining active members of our church. Also, there are opportunities for more direct and relevant impact with our new members via social media.

Conclusion

This model was created to develop a ministry development approach to new member assimilation at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square. The results of the data revealed ministries were developed and equipped to better receive new members into their ministries, helping them get assimilated into the life of the church by establishing meaningful relationships, understanding the values of the church and ministry functions, acquiring knowledge of their spiritual gifts and opportunities to serve in accordance with their gifts, and adapting a positive attitude about remaining active members of the church.

Overall the ministry project achieved the desired results. Workshop participants agreed the workshop was effective and achieved its objective. The participants and facilitators recommended that a Workshop Manual be developed and that the workshop be a required training for all Sanctuary ministry leaders as well as church leaders outside of the context. The participants and facilitators also recommended the assimilation process be a requirement for all Sanctuary new members as well as new members outside of the context.

The project effectiveness will be assessed annually by tracking new members through this model for ministry development approach to new member assimilation process as follows:

1-3 months:

- Attends New Members Class

- Takes Spiritual Gifts Assessment
- Attends New Members Orientation
- Gets Baptized (as appropriate)
- Attends Lord's Supper Service and Receives the Right Hand of Fellowship
- Assigned a First Friend

3-6 months:

- Assigned Watchcare Diaconate
- Attends Bible Study or Sunday School Classes

6-9 months:

- Participates in Ministry Fair
- Joins a Ministry
- Provided a Ministry Manual
- Assigned a Ministry Care Partner

9-12 months:

- Continues to Actively Serve in Ministry

Summary of Learning

Project Reflections

The results of the data revealed that ministries were developed to receive and connect with new members and that new members were intentionally assimilated into the life of the church as a result of the ten-week process of assessing the current new members' process and developing a model for new member assimilation, helping to close the 'back door' at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square. The effectiveness of the model can be attributed to three factors: team approach, ministry training, and the researcher.

The ministry development team that assisted the researcher with this project clearly understood the powerful impact of team members using their gifts to work together to meet goals, whether it be a project team or a ministry team. The team never lost sight of the overall focus on connecting new members with ministry teams where they can grow, develop, and continually serve in accordance with Ephesians 4:11-12 where Paul states that God gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. This team was committed to equipping ministries at The Sanctuary to receive new members in a way that facilitated relationships, discipleship, and the use of spiritual gifts in ministry service. The team was in full agreement that churches grow because they bring together people with enough in common so that personal relationships can easily develop.[11] The team also agreed that churches should operate in obedience to the Great Commission:

> And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Mt 28:18-20 KJV).

This topic is near and dear to each Context Associate, each of whom had either experienced or witnessed the difficulty of new members being assimilated into the life of The Sanctuary due to various relational and organizational barriers, to include cliques and the lack of structure within individual ministries. The team felt very strongly that our new members could not be developed until the ministries were developed first. Thus, the team was eager to assist the Pastor by collaborating their interests, compassion, and gifts to develop a model for new member assimilation, with intentional connecting points, training, and accountability, helping to stop the revolving door syndrome at The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square. This team approach is further illustrated in Exodus 18:17-23 when Moses' father, Jethro advised him that it was not good for him or for the people to govern and advise on all matters by himself, but to develop a capable team to assist him with this work, and the people would then go home in peace. This ministry development team approach allows new members to come into The Sanctuary, serve in accordance with their gifts, go home with peace of mind, and thus excitedly return to worship and serve again, and again, and again, remaining active members.

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[11] Timothy F. Sedgwick, "Making the Connection: Developing the Ministry of Laity," *Ministry Development Journal*, no. 17 (1989): 4.

Prior to ministry training, ministry leaders' understanding of new member assimilation and their role in such a process varied. Some ministries had a good understanding of their respective ministry roles but not how their service impacted other ministries, nor the overall new member experience. Most ministries had no formal documentation of their procedures, no personalized approach to welcoming persons who joined their ministries, and no ongoing training protocols. Many ministry leaders had no awareness of the fact that so many new members were leaving out the back door, or if they were aware, had become accepting of this fact, had not taken the time to determine the reason, or had not considered it their responsibility to take action to change this dreaded outcome. The notion of new member assimilation being someone else's responsibility as opposed to the result of one-on-one relational engagement has been part of the challenge of this model in changing individual and cultural mindsets. This insight is emphasized by author Andrew Weeks in his book entitled *Welcome! Tools & Techniques for New Member Ministry* as he states:[12]

> Experience has proven that one-on-one lay person contact is the most effective form of new member ministry. This ministry cannot be the responsibility of just the evangelism committee or the pastor. The simple mathematical reality is that there is only one (or a few) clergy in any given church, there are many lay people; an effective ministry depends on all of us participating.

Therefore, because ministry development and training (to include assimilation awareness, best practices, mission statements, vision statements, scriptural references, goals, procedures, training guidelines, and prayer) is essential to effective and consistent operations, it allowed for positive learning interaction, thereby contributing to the success of this model.

The interactive approach impacted the results of the model. I had to effectively coordinate all aspects of developing the model, which included establishing relationships with each team member and facilitating team members establishing relationships with each other, ministry leaders, and new members. The researcher provided information, resources, and guidance for each team member to perform their respective assigned tasks, fostering accountability on the part of the researcher and team members.

Following the development of the model, the participants and the researcher further discussed the model. Participants expressed the need to incorporate the functions of the Ministry Development Team officially into the New Members Ministry in order to develop all ministries at The Sanctuary and to closely monitor all new member connecting points: Curbside Greeters, Narthex Hospitality Greeters, Ushers, Intake Process, Front/Church Office, First Friends, Watchcare, Ministry Care Partners, etc. The participants expressed their commitment to personally engage more with new members and to encourage their respective ministries to do likewise. The researcher shared the importance of tracking new members through their assimilation experience to assess the effectiveness of the process.

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[12] Andrew D. Weeks, *Welcome! Tools & Techniques for New Member Ministry* (Washington DC: The Alban Institute, Inc., 1992), xv.

The criteria for ascertaining the success of this model is to achieve the following goals for our new members as established at the beginning of the project:

- To establish meaningful relationships.
- To understand the core values of the church and ministry functions.
- To acquire knowledge of their spiritual gifts and opportunities to serve in accordance with their spiritual gifts.
- To adapt a positive attitude about remaining active members of the church.

The results of the data revealed that ministries were structurally and procedurally developed to receive and connect with new members which caused new members to establish meaningful relationships, understand the core values of The Sanctuary and ministry functions, acquire knowledge of their spiritual gifts and opportunities to serve in accordance with their spiritual gifts, and adapt a positive attitude about remaining active members of The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square.

Improvements were identified to enhance the flow and effectiveness of the process. It would have been beneficial to issue ministry leaders a reference manual and video taping of their Assimilation Workshop for training purposes with their respective ministry members.

Secondly, a qualitative research method was used to develop this research model. Therefore, the purpose was not to seek and prove a statistical conclusion, but to develop a model for new member assimilation within the context of the researcher. The pre-posttest surveys were created to explore the new members' pre-post new members' class knowledge and assimilation experience. However, the researcher believes that if post-test surveys had been taken after the new members had completed the entire new members' assimilation process the results would have more accurately reflected the effectiveness of the process. Also, the researcher believes that if the pre-test survey had contained the same questions as the post-test survey, the results would have yielded clearer results of the model.

Thirdly, changing the timing of the pre-test survey to the first week of membership would result in a more accurate reflection of the new member assimilation process and comparison to the post-test survey.

The project model was modified by the field experience as follows:

Ministry Development

- Ministry leaders attend Ministry Assimilation Orientation/Training Workshop
- Ministry leaders provided a Ministry Assimilation Reference Manual and Training Videotape
- Ministry leaders collaborate with their ministries to develop ministry manuals and Ministry Care Teams
- Ministry leaders prepare and submit monthly Assimilation Status Reports and Coverage Schedules

New Members

- Greeted by curbside greeters, narthex hospitality, ushers, and church members
- Welcomed by the congregation, Pastor, and First Lady
- Complete Intake Process
- Receive Welcome Packet
- Complete Pre-test Survey

- Contacted by Office of Membership Retention
- Contacted by First Friend
- Attend New Members Class
- Complete Spiritual Gifts Assessment
- Attend New Members Orientation (meet ministry leaders)
- Gets Baptized (as appropriate)
- Attend Lord's Supper Service and Receives the Right Hand of Fellowship
- Assigned Watchcare Diaconate
- Attend Bible Study, Sunday School, Discipleship Classes
- Participate in Ministry Fair
- Join a Ministry
- Provided a Ministry Manual
- Maintain contact with Ministry Care Partner
- Complete post-test survey
- Continue to Actively Serve in Ministry

Process Tracking

- Office Staff electronically track ministries and new members through each phase of the New Members Assimilation Process

In terms of limitations of the project, this project was designed for the ministries and new members of The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square but the model is transferable to other contexts. The results may differ depending on the specific dynamics of the context.

Also, the timeframe limitation of this project posed restraints on the number of ministries trained and the number of new members tracked through the process and surveyed.

Conclusion

This project brought about much needed awareness among ministry leaders of the role of their respective ministry in assimilating new members into the life of the church. This researcher is excited about the opportunity to play a leading role in providing tools, techniques, and strategies to facilitate a paradigm shift that calls for structuring of individual ministries and intentional engagement of new members. This is due to the beliefs that church membership is biblical in accordance with 1 Corinthians 12 and that biblical church membership is functioning membership.[13] The reality is that God has not only gifted long-time members of The Sanctuary, but he has also gifted our new family members. Newness and diversity in the church is a good thing, thus, the importance of welcoming new members and helping them to identify their spiritual gifts and serve in ministry, helping to stop the 'revolving door syndrome.'

While conducting this project, this researcher experienced the struggle of the lack of documented historical models within the Baptist denomination to address this problem in the church. Another struggle was the lack of documented accountability measures and technology models being used by churches to enforce and track the new member assimilation process. Therefore, this researcher recommend further study in these areas to enhance the overall effectiveness of church assimilation processes. For example, the installation of a user-friendly software system such as PowerChurch would allow the assimilation process to be more effectively monitored to ensure new members are having a meaningful assimilation experience and individual ministries are held accountable for their role in the assimilation process. PowerChurch, is noted as 'Church Management Software For Today's Growing Churches' and would facilitate entering data, collecting membership information, tracking and managing each phase of the assimilation process, reporting ministry performance, and enhancing engagement and outreach efforts. This critical aspect of ministry development and accountability is supported by authors William and Le Etta Benke in their book entitled *Church Wake-Up Call* in this description of the ministry oversight role: "…monitor progress, evaluate performance, assure plans are properly implemented over time, and update or revise plans as necessary."[14]

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[13] Thom S. Rainer, *I Am A Church Member* (Nashville TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 15.

The researcher's project was developed out of the synergy of her spiritual autobiography, context analysis, and biblical, historical, theological, and theoretical foundational papers. The project was also born out of the researcher's experiences and challenges encountered within the church and her personal life, especially in terms of broken and mended relationships giving way to opportunities to learn, serve, and remain active in the life of The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square, formerly Glendale Baptist Church, where she has been a part of all of her life. She trusted the process of the United Theological Seminary and greatly appreciated the excellent guidance of her school mentors, and thus, believes that her calling as a Doctor of the Church is to challenge and develop ministry leaders to take seriously their role in assimilating new members into the life of the church. It is essential that new members be allowed to grow in an accepting and nurturing environment, understand that their gifts are needed, and that they have a place in the body of Christ.

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[14] William Benke and Le Etta N. Benke, *Church Wake-Up Call, A Ministries Management Approach That is Purpose-Oriented and Inter-Generational in Outreach* (Binghamton, NY: Best Business Books, 2001), 119.

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